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T H E O L O G Y



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ISSN 1027-037X: Series II No. 41, 2009



# **The Pacific Journal of Theology**

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## Editorial



### **Eteuati Tuioti**

*Rev. Dr. Eteuati Tuioti is the current Principal of Piula Theological College. He is also an ordained minister of the Methodist Church of Samoa. He holds a PhD from Drew University, America and lectures in Church History and Methodist Studies.*

This issue of the *Pacific Journal of Theology* marks the eleventh anniversary of Piula Theological College's Bachelor of Divinity Programme in Samoa. The works presented here demonstrate the various areas and disciplines covered in the writings of our BD students, with the exceptions of two other articles and a sermon. The articles included in this issue bring to the theological discussion the diverse elements of theologising in the Samoan culture and Christian tradition. These elements also are significant in the way they promote values peculiar within Oceania and Christian Faith. The importance of contextualisation is also seriously pursued in the content of this issue.

**Upolu Luma Vaai** in his sermon titled 'Communion as the goal of life for Oceania,' promotes the concepts of communion and unity as mentioned in John 17:20 - 23. Vaai challenges the readers to change by asking the question, 'Is changing our attitudes enough to change our actions towards the environment?' Vaai goes on to make the claim that our choices, system of values and relationships are shaped by our belief in God. He argues that communal living is part of our religious belief system. He also brings into the discussion his

cosmological interpretation of human relationships in traditional Samoa. He ends by inviting readers to revive the communal understanding of God to mould the identity of people and inspires communal actions within Oceania.

**Pemerika Sakai** offers a contextual theology of mission based on the Samoan proverbial saying, '*Ia so'o le fau ma le fau.*' The main emphasis of this Samoan proverbial saying is to maintain good relationships among members in traditional Samoan society and all of God's creation. Sakai proposes a contextual model that is appropriate to the contexts of the Samoan culture and Pacific churches. It also presents a challenge to Pacific theologians to construct ways that enhance Christ's mission in their local contexts. This is indeed a Pacific and Samoan way of contextualising Christ as the first *fau* (arched-purlin) that joins all people to reflect the *missio Dei* (God's mission) in the church.

With the problem of high cost of living affecting all parts of the world, **Elisaia Elisaia** proposes that the Samoan concept of *fa'asoa* can be adapted to help people in Oceania in managing what they have in hand for the necessities of life. Elisaia believes that this concept is parallel to John Wesley's three rules of *Gain all you can... Save all you can...and Give all you can...* The principle emphasised in both Wesley's three rules and the Samoan concept of *fa'asoa* is life. Life as used in both contexts is communal life, in the sense that no one suffers or is excluded from the daily provisions.

The role of women in ministry is often a controversial topic in some parts of Oceania. However, theologians in Oceania are now recognising the importance of women's role in the whole ministry of their respective churches. Consequently, women in various locations are now being accepted to pursue theological education as God's gift to all of humanity. Some churches have gone further to accept women into their ordained ministry. But the debate continues for some churches in Oceania! **Mose Mailo** brings to our theological





conversation various insights about the transformative nature of Jesus' ministry according to the Gospel of John 2: 1 - 11. The involvement of Jesus' mother in the whole wedding scene shows how Jesus transforms the existing values and ways of humanity (status quo) into a new God created community. This also includes the transformation of the place and role of women into a new existence. This article challenges our own individual biases regarding the role of women in our own respective churches.

**Piula Theological College, BD Thesis Reports** present outlines of BD theses written by students at Piula Theological College in the areas of Church and Society, Biblical Studies, and Theology and Ethics. These reports give readers doing general theological research, and in particular those engaging in contextual theology, an indication of research and thinking in the college.

**Fereti Seve** provides an interpretation of hospitality based on the stories in the First Testament and the Samoan culture. As the world and Oceania compete for resources and available goods for life, the culture of hospitality is also fading in importance and practice. Seve tries to revive the importance of hospitality not only according to First Testament stories, but also within the Samoan culture. It is the practical realisation of God's own hospitality to humankind.

**Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko** concludes the issue with a reflection on Paulo Freire's philosophy of conscientisation as a model to enhance Pacific women's participation in groups and decision making, and to empower women's spiritual lives. It is a powerful model that parallels the Pacific values of open sharing, unity and love. This model is put into practice through the Bible Study prepared. In this way the article recognises the importance of praxis (action and reflection) as a means of liberating women from situations that cause oppression.

May the articles in this issue enhance our ways of theologising and bring new insights to the never ending process of contextualisation in Oceania.



[A Sermon presented at the Pacific Conference of Churches Workshop on 'Church-State Covenant on the Environment', Jovili Meo Mission Centre, Suva, Fiji Islands]

## Church - State Covenant on the Environment

### **Upolu Lima Vaai**

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Undoubtedly, after all that we have shared and discussed this week on the Environment, there is a desperate call for change. In a single yet unified voice, we call for a change of human attitudes towards the environment. This is put succinctly by Suliana Siwatibau in her presentation this week that: 'Environment protection requires changes in lifestyles and attitudes of the people. The fundamental values we aspire to have to change'. But I want to pose a crucial yet challenging question. 'Is changing our attitudes enough to change our actions towards the environment?'

I believe focusing only on changing attitudes and actions is not enough. We have deliberated this week on the many possible principles to enrich our vision of change. But I want to add another from a theological perspective. We need to get to the roots. Attitudes stem from beliefs and beliefs are formed from ideologies or theologies that have been constructed and still exist.

Religious beliefs shape and mould the way we act and do things every day. I am with Elizabeth Johnson in affirming that our belief in God is fundamental to how



we behave and act as Christians. It gives direction to all our choices, system of values and relationships. For example, believing in a warlike and angry God promotes aggressiveness in any kind of relationship. Believing in a divine Judge inspires us to be judgmental on others. Worshipping a tyrant and remote God inspires us to distance ourselves from creation to become rulers. Therefore, it is important that we look at our confessional beliefs that shape our response and direct our decision making towards the environment.

In many parts of Oceania, 'communal living' was part of our religious belief system. Life oriented around this belief whether in fishing, constructing, planting, harvesting, eating, or deciding. 'In Oceania, communion and relationship was the goal of life.'

We used to believe in some form of deity who is communal and relational in nature, who dwells among us, who is not far from our households, our plantations, our sea, our land, even our decision making. This communal understanding of God moulded the identity of the people and inspired communal actions within the village and social setting.

In Samoa, for example, communal living (also known as *faaalaloalo*) is premised in cosmology. The heavens (including the deity Tagaloa) married the earth and produced the human being. This implies a cosmic family, a cosmic union, a cosmic household. In simple words, heaven and earth are the parents; the human being is the child, the progeny of their union. This triad privileges relationship and *faaalaloalo*. To be more specific, because communion is premised in cosmology, it is also divinely originated.

Because the human being understands itself as a cosmological child, two imperatives are implied. Firstly, the human being is not separated from heaven and earth. In other words, heaven and earth are inclusive of the human being. The human being is the 'face' of the cosmos. It

can only define itself in relation to heaven and earth. There is no identity apart from the cosmic parents. This means that our way of thinking is closely connected to cosmology. This is evident in the concept *Tagata* (person). Person in Samoa and I believe in many parts of the Pacific is communal. The human person is the face of the community. Father, mother, aunties and uncles, extended family, village, ancestors, and of course the land and environment are all inclusive of a person. Because of this, they are part of one's existence and identity. One cannot divorce himself/herself from these realities.

Secondly, because heaven and earth are the parents, respecting and honouring them is a responsibility of the child, the human being. Mythology confirms that it is only when the human being asks the spirits of the land that he/she is granted permission for use. All of life is a life of self-dedication, a life of relationship.

Why do I need to say all of this? Do we need to go back to the old traditional lifestyle to reclaim communion with others and communion with creation? With the near defeat of the communal face in Oceania to the individual secular face from outside, the seeming fracturing of relationship in every sphere of life in Oceania, the diminishing of community and social life in favour of private autonomous life, we are in a period of 'displacement.' Displacement here means that we have deliberately misplaced the gift given to us by God. This gift is the gift of communion. Losing this is losing all that we have to survive as a people.

Why did Leslie Boseto warn us that our security in Oceania lies in communion and relationship? It is because this is all we have to survive as a people. Life without communion is life without hope. I believe it is still not too late to revive that gift that was once our security and hope. But how does this happen? It seems to me that for us, as Oceanic Christians, that gift can be resurrected if we dig deep into the mystery of God revealed through Jesus Christ in the Spirit as attested in the Scriptures.



The gospel of John reminds us that the purpose of God is communion with us and of us with others (cosmic others). In Jesus' words: 'that they may be one as we are one.' Jesus' prayer appeals to his communion with his Father as a model for communion of that which is not God.

While the Father is inclusive of the Son, the Son is also inclusive of the Father, as also of the Spirit. Because of this mutual inclusiveness, the Incarnation marks the revelation of God's 'face'. Jesus Christ is the *Atalii*, meaning the 'face of the father'. In Samoa, mutual inclusiveness means that the Persons of the Trinity exist in *faaaloalo* or communion, a reciprocal face-to-face relationship based on self-giving, self-dedication, respect, honour and embrace. This is their life, their goal as divine Persons; to love, honour and embrace the others. Hence, the unity of the three Persons derives from the union of their love as revealed in the economy of salvation.

This is called by the patristic fathers, especially the Cappadocians, as the 'divine circle of love' where the three Persons of the Trinity exist in reciprocal giving and receiving of love. This reciprocal self-giving and self-dedication of one Person to the other means that one can find meaning and identity only in relation to the other. In my language, God exists in *faaaloalo*. In this divine circle of *faaaloalo*, not only is that one Person manifested in the other, one Person also faces the other in love and respect.

Because of the overflow of communion in the Trinity, the divine circle of life was freely opened up through Jesus Christ to embrace humanity and the whole of creation. As John's Christ is a cosmic Christ, salvation therefore is cosmic salvation, and creation is part of that. We are invited together with creation to share in that divine way of life, a life of communion. This is God's purpose for us, to be united with God by embracing one another including the whole of creation.

For us in Oceania, the gift of the Triune God made known through Jesus Christ in the Spirit – the gift of ‘communion’ – can be deeply and effectively expressed through our communal way of life ‘given’ to us by God. It is only in that sense that the doctrine of the Triune God can become a practical belief, a living confessional belief. As the three Persons of the Trinity love, honour and embrace the other, we are challenged to do the same not only to the other human beings, but also with creation.

In Oceania, our understanding of communion is not anthropocentric or human oriented as John MacMurray and others say. Communion is cosmological, which includes human beings, animals, trees, land, sea, ancestors and so forth. This means acknowledging creation as part of us, a part of our identity as a people. This is evident in the Genesis story where God formed us in the womb of the earth, acting as a *Faatosaga* (midwife) to bring us forth from that womb into new life in the world. The earth here is our *tina* (mother), our *tua’a* (ancestor).

For me, reinstating the dignity of creation starts with acknowledging that creation is part of us, it is inclusive of us. This means that we are not rulers of creation. Creation is not our opposite. It is not an object. In the language of Genesis, we are only people brought forth from the womb of our Mother – earth.

If we are desperate for a change of our attitudes towards creation, radical change starts with our beliefs. In particular, we need to change the way we believe in God. We are called to re-examine our usual belief that God is the sovereign ruler, remote and distant from creation because it is sinful, a kind of God who is not involved in the world. This belief warrants the human beings to become rulers over creation.

We need to look at creation from a communal perspective, or in John’s words, from a Trinitarian perspective, where creation is



considered as part of the purpose and salvation of God. In order to have right relationship with creation, we need to start in the perspective of the 'all-embracing', 'self-dedication' and 'self-giving' now fully revealed in Christ. We need to look at creation as a partner in a face-to-face relationship, a relationship that exists in reciprocal giving and receiving, a partner that gives us livelihood while at the same time we give back honour and protection, a partner that is mutually inclusive of us.

Once we change our belief, we can also change our language. The language that creation loves to speak is the language of 'silence', the silence of colours and the silence of its graceful movements. Our response to creation is the language of relationship such as 'you are my mother', 'you are my life', 'and you are my hope'. Without this reciprocal giving and receiving, silence here can be transformed into oppression and captivity. As our language changes, our attitudes are expected to change. Creation initiates giving us security and hope for us. We respond in the act of love and respect.

While the goal of life for God is to be in communion with us and with his creation through Christ in the Spirit, we are also invited to walk in the same Trinitarian traces – 'to be in communion and to be one with creation.' Amen.



## Prayer

Fire of hope let it flame  
From diverse backgrounds we unite to throw in  
different cultural, theological, and professional branches  
giving it life and perpetual coal  
May new fires of environmental awareness  
be drawn from this one  
Empowered by your Spirit of hope

We start with us  
Instead of living to receive, may we live to give  
Instead of living selfishly, may we live communally  
Instead of living in competition, may we live in complementarity  
Instead of living as an opposite, may we live as a partner  
Instead of living for today, may we live also for tomorrow  
Instead of living for us, may we live for others  
as you have lived for all through Christ in the Spirit  
Triune God, let this fire flame to give light to our people. Amen.





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(The above Bibliography is the completion of Rev. Fereti Seve's article titled, "A Hermeneutic of Hospitality from Pages 12 to 18 of this Issue.)



### **Fereti Seve**

*Rev. Fereti Seve is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church of Samoa. Holds a Bachelor of Divinity from Pacific Theological College, Suva and a Master of Theology from University of Auckland, New Zealand. Presently teaching Old Testament at Pinla Theological College.*

## A Hermeneutic of Hospitality

### Introduction

The practice of hospitality was common to many social groups throughout the period in which the First Testament and New Testament were composed. The word most often associated with hospitality in the Septuagint and the New Testament is *xenos*, which literally means foreigner, stranger, or even enemy. The term comes to denote both guest and host alike.

The Hebrew Scriptures does not have any exact word for 'hospitality', but the practice of hospitality is evident in the stories of the patriarchs in the First Testament (refer to Gen.18:1-16; Gen.19:1-13; Gen.24:15-54) and accounts in the Book of Judges. This article discusses the significance of hospitality as portrayed in the selected stories from the First Testament and the Samoan culture of *talimalo* (hospitality).

### Hospitality in the First Testament

In the First Testament teachings, the Israelites are expected to practise hospitality and serve as hosts, treating human life with respect and dignity. Hospitality is regarded as an act of righteous, godly behaviour. It is a way of life during the nomadic experiences of the Israelites.



According to early Hebrew traditions, the Israelites were called 'transhuman pastoralists'<sup>1</sup>. They are always on the move, in obedience to God's command and in search of new lands of settlement. In the Genesis' account, Abraham particularly appears to live out this nomadic life style, by grazing their flocks, living in tents, and moving from one place to another<sup>2</sup>. The Israelites live very closely to each other in clans and families. The clan guarantees the safety of the individual and the individual also is responsible for the clan as a whole<sup>3</sup>.

Despite the clan's closeness and caring for one another, they cannot avoid problems such as natural disasters, or being raided by 'a hostile tribe'<sup>4</sup>. However, other members of the clan are quick to support and help in ways that enable people to continue with their life. So '...due to the special conditions of life in the desert, nomads developed a particular kind of sense of responsibility for each other'<sup>5</sup>. And it is this aspect which John W. Flight acknowledges when stating, '...simple and beautiful hospitality is a feature of nomadic life'<sup>6</sup> (1923:160).

#### *Abraham's Hospitality (Gen.18:1-16)*

The story of Abraham's hospitality (Gen.18:1-16) to the three men happens at the oaks of Mamre (18:1), while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent. Mamre is a significant place in Abraham's life as it is the place where his name was changed from Abram to Abraham (17:5), and his wife's Sarai's name changed to Sarah (17:15). The significance of Mamre originates also from the story of Abraham's hospitality to the three men. He entertains the three mysterious visitors and is rewarded by the promise of a son to be born to Sarah even in her old age (18:9-15).

Abraham's invitation to the three men is crucial in many ways: First, as soon as he sees the three men he runs from the entrance of his tent. His actions reflect love and honour. Second, he bows down before the men. Bowing is a sign of humility and respect. His actions are part and parcel of the concept of hospitality. The third

significant element of Abraham's invitation is his offer to the strangers. Abraham offers them water and bread, the basic sustenance for life. He leaves no room for introductions, but quickly invites the three men. Claus Westermann claims that 'Abraham does not know who the strangers are, but he cannot and will not exclude the possibility that they are worthy of honour'<sup>7</sup>.

#### *Lot's Hospitality to the Two Messengers (Gen.19:1-13)*

This is the story of Lot's hospitality to the two angels who entered Sodom and Gomorrah. The two angels arrive at Sodom in the evening and Lot acts immediately to receive them. He rises and bows with his face to the ground. The importance of Lot's hospitality is evident in the extreme situations such as offering his two daughters in return for the safety of his visitors. This story exposes an element of sacrifice in hospitality. Gerhard von Rad explains Lot's actions as '...an attempt to preserve the sacredness of hospitality by means of an extreme measure'<sup>8</sup>

### Hospitality in the Samoan Culture

A Samoan hermeneutic of hospitality is derived from the cultural setting of a *fale talimalo*, an open house for hosting guests. Early Samoans lived in open houses. The idea of open houses demonstrates an open invitation to strangers. The following stories show the various ways in which the concept of hospitality is practised within the Samoan culture.

#### *The Chief of Sataupuala's Hospitality*

Tauiliili is a chief from Savaii island in Samoa. He travels with his men to the island of Upolu. He realises that it is sunset and that night is approaching. He calls his men to come together. The canoes come together and form a circle on the sea. Tauiliili then calls them to light their '*lamaga*' (bundle of coconut leaves bound together for light) and have a rest.



It is a clear night and the chief of Satapuala (a village on the island of Upolu) sees the lights on the sea. The chief sends two of his servants to the ocean to explore what is happening. The two servants return and tell their chief that it is Tautilili and his men from Savaii camping on the sea. The chief sends back his servants and to invite Tautilili and his men to rest at his place. Tautilili accepts the invitation and then comes ashore. The chief asks his servants to prepare a kava ceremony to welcome their visitors.

Despite being late at night, the chief instructs his people to bring some food for Tautilili and his people. Unfortunately there is no water. The chief commands his servants to separate the stones from the pile of stones in front of the chief's house and search for water. After separating the pile of stones, clear water springs out of the spot. The servants use this water to mix the kava for their chief and Tautilili. The chief's servants serve Tautilili and his men with kava and food. The men are well fed and satisfied.

In the morning Tautilili and his men prepare to continue their journey. Tautilili thanks the chief for his hospitality. As a gift of appreciation for the chief's hospitality, he gives the chief the last three letters of his name (*Ili*) 'to be a servant to the chief.' He also calls the chief's place *Vaiauanu* (water springing out). The name *Vaiauanu* and the title *Ili* are historical landmarks of the chief's hospitality to Tautilili and his men.

#### *Leiautaua's Hospitality to Nafanua*

Leiautaua is a chief from Manono. He likes to go fishing early in the morning, and continues until evening. While Leiautaua was fishing, Nafanua (a female chief from Savaii) sails from Savaii to Upolu and comes across Leiautaua's fishing spot. He has not caught any fish. Leiautaua calls upon her and apologises that he has not caught any fish to give her. He tells her that perhaps when she comes back he will have some. Nafanua continues with her journey. In the

evening, Nafanua returns from Upolu. She comes across Leiataua who, at this stage, has made a catch. Leiataua signals to Nafanua and offers her his catch. Nafanua greatly appreciates Leiataua's hospitality and in return offers him the chiefly title Leiataua Lesa. This title has become a prominent *matai* title in Manono. It reminds people of Leiataua's hospitality to Nafanua.

### The Similarities between the Stories of Hospitality in the First Testament and Samoan Culture

The selected stories from the First Testament and Samoan culture reveal essential elements of hospitality. These aspects include place, time, invitation, food, as well as the extreme situations in life. Perhaps it is fair to say that these aspects also expose the element of surprise in hospitality.

Abraham's hospitality takes place at his home, however temporary that home may be. He prepares food for the men and serves them at his home. Lot's hospitality to the two strangers begins from the city gate but he does not serve them until they reach his home. The actual serving of the men with food takes place at Lot's home. He takes the messengers to his home. The Samoan stories also take place at home. Home in these stories include one's dwelling place and the environment pertaining to his home, such as the sea and forest. The chief of Satapuala hosts Tauiliili at his home. Leiataua offers hospitality from the resources available from his social location.

The significance of hospitality goes beyond time. People can be received at any time they come. The invitation is also extended whenever it is needed. Both the First Testament and Samoan culture of hospitality mention the invitation at the beginning. Abraham runs from his tent to invite the three men. Lot quickly rises to invite the



two messengers. The chief of Satapuala invites Tautili to his place. The invitation is far more important than a simple saying, 'Come in.' It involves gestures of respect and humility through words and actions. Abraham bows down before the three men and addresses them in a respectful manner.

The significance of hospitality to both in the First testament and the Samoan culture is evident in the resources offered in terms of food. Both cultures recognise that it is not enough to invite people home but they need to be offered some food. Abraham immediately asks Sarah to prepare food for his guests. Although it is evening time, Lot orders his servants to prepare a meal for the visitors. In the Samoan culture, food is regarded as an important element of hospitality.

There is also an element of surprise in hospitality as evident in the selected stories. These surprises are the rewards received, as well as the extremes one faces. In the story of Lot's hospitality, he does not only offer hospitality in terms of food but also offers his two daughters. Hospitality includes unexpected sacrificial act.

## Conclusion

Both the First Testament and the Samoan stories reveal the great care people offer to their guests. It leads them to extreme acts. It may seem extremely difficult from a secular point of view, but from a Christian perspective, one can identify with the extremes of hospitality discussed in this article when considering God's act through Jesus Christ. As Christians, we regularly celebrate the offering of God's only son for salvation. It is an extreme act. But it is God's act of hospitality for the world. It is through this act of God that humans are invited to continue the process of providing for those in need.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979) p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> J. Van Seters, *The Biblical Journey of Faith: The Road of the Sojourner* (Philadelphia Fortress, 1988) p. 646.

<sup>3</sup> H. Eberhard von Waldow, 'Social Responsibilities and Social Structure in Early Israel', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. Vol.3, 1970, 186.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 187

<sup>6</sup> John W. Flight, 'The Nomadic Idea and the Ideal in the Old Testament', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 42, 1923, p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, Translated by John J. Scullion, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985, p. 277

<sup>8</sup> Westermann, Claus. *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*. Translated by John J. Scullion. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985.

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*Ia So'o le Fau ma le Fau*  
(Let the Arched-Purlin be Connected  
with the Arched-Purlin):  
A Contextual Theology of Mission in  
the Samoan Context



**Pemerika Sakai**

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### Introduction

Samoa has its own proverbial sayings or *alagaupu*. These sayings originate from its traditions, culture, myths, legends and history, which often relate to the way people do manual work, fishing, hunting, carving and everyday experiences. According to E. Schults, *alagaupu* are '...proverbial expressions, mostly in elliptically mutilated form, taken from the mythology, the history and the everyday lives of the Samoan people and serve to illustrate their opinions and utterances'<sup>1</sup>. Because of the profound meanings of *alagaupu*, they tend to be used regularly by Samoan orators in their speeches and church ministers in their sermons. Such use reflects the genuine need of integrating proverbial expressions (*alagaupu*) into our means of theologising.

This article hopes to demonstrate that the continuity of Christ's mission is theologically expressed in the Samoan proverbial saying, *Ia so'o le fau ma le fau*. This proverb is the basis of a contextual theology of mission rooted in the Samoan cultural context. It brings together the community of faith as one people in body, mind and soul. Thus, this continuity depends on our commitment to being the Church in mission. Mission here, refers

primarily to the *missio Dei* (God's mission), that is, God's self revelation as the One who loves the world and gets involved in the activities of the world. *Missio Dei* enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people<sup>2</sup>. This mission is achieved through the sending of Jesus Christ, and continued by the church.

## Definition of Concepts

There are three key words in this proverb that require operational definitions: *ia*, *so'o* and *fau*. They have several meanings in the Samoan context. The following definitions will demonstrate the richness and the variety of contexts in which they are applied.

### *Ia*

The word *ia* or *Ia* means, 'Let' or 'in order to'<sup>3</sup>. It serves to indicate a command, wish or purpose. Likewise, *Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* is translated as 'Let the *fau* (arched purlin) be connected to the other' (in order to form the wall-plate). It indicates the authority, permission or chance given to someone to perform a given task for a purpose.

### *So'o*

As an adverb *so'o* means, 'always', 'often' or 'frequently'. It indicates an action or event repeated more than once or twice. As an example: *tagi so'o* - always crying, *tautala so'o* - talking too often, *sau so'o* - comes frequently. As a pronoun, *so'o* means 'any' (anything, anytime, anywhere, anyone). It demonstrates a choice. It refers to a chance or freedom given to someone to do something at random. For instance: *fa'aaoga so'o se mea* - use anything, *sau i so'o se taimi* - come at anytime, *tu'u i so'o se mea* - place it anywhere, *ta'u i so'o se tasi* - tell anyone or anybody. There is no specific selection. It may also demonstrate a freedom to choose what suits one's need/s.

As a verb, *so'o* depicts different meanings. *E so'o le tama i lona tamâ* - The boy is like his father. This implies a genetic trait that the son inherits from his father. This may be seen in the general physical



build, attitude or other human traits. As an example; 'He is tall like his father' or 'He loves his parents like his father'. At the same time, it indicates the likeness between the father and son. It also portrays the Samoan term *atalii* (the image of the father or male) the resemblance of the father in the son.

*Ua so'o le fale i fala* - The house is covered with mats. This demonstrates the quantity of mats available. It also reflects the sense of security in terms of mats and the wealth of Samoan family in terms of handicrafts. Quantity implies something readily available whenever there is a need.

*Sa so'o e Toma laau o le fatamannu* - Toma joined sticks of the scaffold. This demonstrates the putting together of two or more sticks. It portrays the joining of more than two forces. Adding two or more forces makes the combination much more solid and stronger. On the other hand, the joint demonstrates the contribution of each stick to help hold the house together.

*So'o* can also be a root word that forms more verbs. For example: the word *feso'otai*. It means 'to relate' or 'to communicate'. Here, the prefix *fe* gives the root word its function while the suffix *tai* adds the degree of the action taken. Hence, *feso'otai* can therefore mean 'to bring a relation closer'. It may also apply to making communication effective. This means that the connection or the communication of many people forms a community or union.

As a noun, *so'o* means 'fellowship' or 'disciple'. *So'o* or fellowship is when two or more individuals or groups come together to enjoy the company of one another. They share in terms of food and drinks, entertainment, social activities, cultural values in thoughts and deeds. This indicates the feeling of acceptance among the members. Thus, one values and trusts the views and feelings of the other.

*So'o* or disciple is someone who absorbs the influence from his/her mentor, coach or teacher, and attempts to imitate it all through. This demonstrates the physical appearance in terms of morals and experiences. For example: in the Samoan context, the untitled men's classroom is the house of chiefs and orators. They do not have formal classroom settings as in Samoa today. Their learning place is the house of *matai* (chiefs). During meetings and discussions, the untitled men listen and observe the ways the chiefs and orators speak. At the same time they also learn from the older untitled men of the proper ways to serve *matai*. Learning is an ongoing process of action and reflection on Samoan culture and traditions.

### *Fau*

The word '*fau*' has a variety of meanings as well. As a verb, *fau* literally means, 'to build' or 'to construct'. It requires a builder and tools to do the work. It can also mean, 'to create' or 'to rearrange' an old structure into a new thing. Both implications of the verb *fau* reflect carpentry talents and knowledge. *Fau* can also be an adjective. It literally means 'wrong' or 'false'. It is commonly used in sports or social affairs. For example *Ua fau lau fana* - You made a wrong shot, *Ua fau le gagana* - Wrong speech.

As a noun, *fau* is the Samoan name for the beach-hibiscus. 'The beach-hibiscus is one of the most common and useful of the Pacific trees and in Hawaii, they call it *hau*, *au* in the Cooks, *fou* in Niue, *van* in Fiji, *pago* in Guam and *fau* in Tonga and Samoa<sup>4</sup>.

*Fau* or beach-hibiscus is very common and useful in Samoa. The tree thrives almost everywhere under Samoan weather conditions. It grows on the seashore, rocks and swamps till the brow of the Samoa islands.

Fishermen use the *fau* buds to wipe their goggles while they prepare for fishing. This usage of the *fau* ensures a clear view under sea water. The *fau* fibre is also used in a variety of fishing skills. For instance,



fishermen use it to patch the holes in their fishing net and to tie up their fishing hooks and fishing net floats to the line.

The strong *fau* fibre is also used as a strainer and squeezer when preparing Samoan *ava* (*kava*). The *fau* fibre filters away the pounded or unwanted shreds and dissolves the good flavour in the water. The strength of the *fau* fibre can be one of the reasons why Samoan ancestors used it for this purpose. In relation to the construction of a Samoan house, the *fau* fibre is used to tie wooden scaffolding.

*Fau* wood is used for *amopou* (wall-plate) of the Samoan house. It is best known for its value in the Samoan house as well. The word *amopou* is made up of two words which means 'post'. It refers to the *amopou* or the wall-plate carried by the posts or sitting on the top of the posts. This *amopou* or wall-plate is also called *fau* or *faulalo*. The term *faulalo* is made up of two words, *fau* and *lalo*. *Fau* is the name for the wall-plate but *lalo* means 'bottom' or 'underneath'. The word *lalo* demonstrates the position of the *fau* in the Samoan house. This position is the reason for it being called *faulalo*. It connects the posts together. It also connects the lower part to the upper part of the house. Apparently, the *faulalo* or *amopou* functions to hold the entire house structure into one piece.

#### *The Significance of the Fau in Traditional Samoan Society*

In traditional Samoa, the '*fau*' or '*faulalo*' is the most important stage. The *fau* (wall-plate) determines the space and length of the posts and the foundation of the house (Amosa Tapuai in an interview with the author on 6 July 2006). It means that the carpenter lashes the *fau* on the ground. After that he then lifts it up and uses any long wood just to hold it up while he connects it to the centre part. His next job is to line or measure the posts depending on the length of the *fau* (wall-plate).

When the carpenter puts up this wall-plate, it is one of the most significant times for the carpenter especially the owner and his family. Augustin Kramer explains the significance of this event as follows:

The carpenter says to the chief, Tomorrow we will put up the large arched purlins. When that is done in that way by the carpenter, the chief says to his family. Let us now fashion the symbol of recognition of our family to acknowledge by it that the house is now erected. And the chief says to all the people of his family. Let each of you come with three or four pigs each and each one with 100 taros. And the family gives order to get the food ready for the carpenter, and this is called the announcement of the erection of the house. If the chief has many families or sons, often there are as many as 50 to 100 pigs at such a celebration for the erection of the house<sup>5</sup>.

Not only is that food prepared for the big feast with the carpenter but fine mats, *tapa* cloth and other Samoan handcrafts are provided for the carpenter. This tradition is an expression of thanksgiving and celebration which is also celebrated in an *ava* ceremony.

### The Origin of the Proverb

*Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* has a meaningful relationship to the social, cultural and religious life of Samoan people. It originates from the making of the *amopou* or wall-plate of the Samoan house. The first Samoan house was built in a circular design. It is called '*Fale Lapotopoto*' (round house) or *Fale Tele* (large house)<sup>6</sup>.

In the process of building a Samoan *fale*, the *fau* wood is selected for construction because of its ability to 'strengthen', 'to connect' all parts, and to 'facilitate circular curves.' Firstly, the carpenter builds the centre part. This centre part has only four posts including the one or two main pillars in the middle. This depends on the carpenter's authority and design. After the centre-part, the carpenter then builds the *amopou* or *faulalo* (wall-plate) of the two round ends (*tala*) of the house. These



round ends are connected to both sides of the centre part to make a complete circle. 'The strength of the house depends on the quality of the *fau*, the mediator that joins one post to another. In other words the *fau* is the junction of all the house parts' (Iosua Autagavaia in an interview with the author, 11 May 2006).

Secondly, the whole *fale* is built through binding and connecting *fau* woods. One *fau* is connected to another *fau* through interlocking, as demonstrated in the word *so'ofau* (binding the *fau*). The binding of two or more *fau* woods not only forms an expected architectural frame, but also provides 'unity' and 'shape' for the *fale*. The completion of a *fale* comes from the process of connecting and binding of *fau* woods to form different parts.

Thirdly, the *fau* is selected for binding purpose because of its flexibility. For example, when putting together the circular *amopou* or *faulalo*, the *fau* wood can be used to direct and facilitate the curves needed to make a circular shape. In connecting and binding, the *fau* is the only wood that can be 'twisted' and 'bent' to form circular curves. That is why it is very important that the *fau* is connected to another *fau* to maintain the strength, unity and connectedness

## A Contextual Application of Proverb

### *Traditional Samoan Society*

This proverb is often used as an encouragement, appreciation or blessing in the social and religious life of Samoan people. It applies to the heirs of the Samoan families. Traditionally, every Samoan family has one high chief who is either an orator or paramount chief. The rest of the family (extended family) serves and supports him in all aspects of social and cultural service. He calls his family together when he is older and can no longer perform his duties. This is an opportunity for him to say his 'last words' and offer thanks to his family for the service accorded to him during his leadership. Because he has received the services from his family, he knows very



well of those that have served him truly and honestly. Therefore, he gives his assessment of the right person to be the next high chief. His choice for the next high chief aims to maintain and continue the standards that he has set for the family.

The selection of the new high chief must ensure that the elected person has shown himself to be capable in oratory and decision making, of good judgement and above all, always guided by love for the family. The significance of these qualities is to bind the family together like the *fau* binding the different parts of the Samoan house. It is important that the next high chief shows qualities of a *fau* that is hard and solid in terms of courage and can hold the whole house (family) in one accord. For the family to maintain its integrity, the former high chief (*fau*) must be replaced by a successor who is just as strong and binding as he has been.

#### *Contemporary Samoan Society*

The tradition of using *fau* in house construction has changed considerably because of the advance in technology. The *fau* is no longer used as Samoans have opted for modern materials that are easily available and can withstand cyclones. Samoan people have also shifted their emphasis to celebrate the finishing and opening of the *fale*. Nowadays, when the *fau* or wall-plate is placed, Samoans just have a small feast for celebration. Even though the significance of this tradition still exists, it no longer holds the degree of importance it did in traditional Samoan society.

The application of *Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* in contemporary society is also influenced by factors such as education and wealth. For example, the selection of a family chief now depends on wealth, power and prestige. So because of the unpredictable effects of such factors, the continuity of good leadership and love for family members no longer exists. Consequently, we now have a tradition of *Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* in terms of corruption and immorality in leadership.





## *Ia So'o le Fau ma le Fau* as the Great Commission

*Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* is parallel to the Great Commission, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:19 – 20). They both serve to indicate the great desire or purpose for the continuity of God's mission. This purpose is to be Christ-like in words and actions. There can be no doubt, then, that Jesus acted under authority duly given to him by the Father. That he did not act authoritatively before his baptism, but began to do so immediately thereafter, makes it clear that it was at that event that such authority was given to him<sup>7</sup>.

Jesus did it the same way as the Father did. He knew his last hour on earth. He commanded his disciples to go and make disciples under his authority. This authority includes humility and love. He let them go as servants and not to be served. They are commanded to go, teach and baptise. These are the tools they have been commanded to use, to shape, mould and nurture new disciples. When people accept their teachings, then they may be bound into the family of God through baptism. This means that they have connected the carved people as the carpenter connects the *fau* to another.

On the other hand, if they did exactly as Jesus did that means the commission is achieved, but the continuity of the mission needs to be maintained as in *Ia so'o le fau ma le fau*. Their task is the continuation of Christ's mission on earth as in Ephesian 4:1 – 6:

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the

bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Theologically, Jesus is the first *fau*, chosen by God. Paul is the next *fau*. Paul maintains the unity created by God the Father. He did exactly the same as Jesus. Paul did not make a new unity but continued the unity established by Christ. He faced the same persecutions as Jesus. He made every effort to keep and maintain the message and the purpose of his calling. He used the same tools as Jesus did. These tools are humility and love. In other words we can say that Paul's mission was to continue what Christ has done, to continue joining *fau* for Christ. There is a continuation of the same gospel. Ephesians 4:1 - 6 signifies the oneness of the Holy Trinity. This oneness indicates the stability and the close unity of the trinitarian family.

## The Apostolic Church and Christ's Mission of Service

When we refer to the Church as apostolic, it means that the Church in its mission continues the mission of Christ. In other words, the Church has no mission, apart from the mission of Christ. The apostolicity of the Church, therefore, depends on the mission of the Church to the people rather than any theory of succession, or continuity of the laying of hands<sup>8</sup>.

As the apostolic Church, we are called to this very role of God to *fau*, *fafau* and *fau**fau*, to build or create, recreate and continue to create. But the purpose of this task of continuing to join *fau* is to sustain life in its fullness. As Jesus, the main *fau*, said to the disciples, the joint *fau* of the house which is the community of faith, 'See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you' (Lk.10:19).



The spread of the gospel is the outcome of the apostles' mission. In fact, the blood of the apostle is the seed of the gospel. Theologically, the blood of Jesus, the *fau* sent from God is the seed for everyone. According to history, the apostles encountered heavy persecutions and afflictions during the early church. They lost their lives in following the footsteps of Jesus Christ. They offered service even at the risk of suffering heavy persecutions. Their love and faith for Jesus and Christian fellowship made them stronger in proclaiming the gospel. This is likened to the service Jesus offered for the world by dying to redeem his people. Therefore, the apostles have followed, worthy of their calling in keeping and maintaining the unity of the Spirit. Thus, the apostles become the *fau*, who join God's purpose in Jesus for salvation. Hence, the proverb '*Ia so'o le fau ma le fau*' is continued.

### *Ia So'o le Fau ma le Fau: A Contextualisation*

*Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* has challenging impacts in the social and religious life of Samoan people. The proposed model is based on certain assumptions: First, being informed of the cultural significance of the *fau* and the biblical and theological discussion of mission gives us a profound understanding of the continuity rooted in this important aspect of Samoan culture. It stresses the importance of being in relationship with each other, as God relates to the Son and the Spirit. Thus, this same idea is expressed in the Samoan philosophy, *O le tagata ma lona aiga*, meaning a person and his/her family.' It conveys the feeling of caring for one another. In the context of a traditional Samoan house, the emphasis is on connection and unity as reflected in the role of the *fau* in the construction. As the *fau* joins all parts of the house together, we are joined by Christ through the Spirit. The following discussion portrays how this proverb is lived out in practice in different contexts of Samoan people's lives.

#### *Life of an Individual*

Traditionally this proverb applies to the heritage carried through the line of heirs of the Samoan family. This is imminent in transmitting

the *matai* title of the family from one generation to the next. As one title holder passes on, the family is obliged to select the most appropriate candidate to take over. Most often the family would look for an heir who possesses good leadership skills. These skills are learned informally through individual life and service in the extended family circle. These are qualitative skills imperative in the shaping of an individual.

Samoans believed in genetic transmission of character and skills. That is, if the father is a fisherman, the son should grow up to be a fisherman also. If the father is an orator, then the son should have the knowledge to make decisions and especially the traits befitting an orator. These characteristics are supposedly carried through the blood lines as well as the practical learning and experience within family relationships.

If the son can do exactly what his father did, it means that he is like his father. This is exactly the same as the Samoan women. They learn from their mothers in doing women's duties. Take for instance the weaving of mats, fine mats, baskets, making cloths and so forth. When boys and girls grow up and demonstrate the same traits and standards their parents have set, then people talk about the successful connecting of *fau*. Because there is a continuity of family mannerism and traits.

### *Life in Partnership*

Physically and biologically men and women have different anatomies and likewise different strengths. There are roles better suited to men, women and vice versa. This is where partnership is crucial, such that the husband complements the wife, and in turn, the wife complements the husband. A form of partnership is achieved through continuing qualitative sharing. When this comes into good effect, it implies the unity of *fau* portrayed in the husband and wife relationship. When this feeling of mutuality is expressed, the proverb, *Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* becomes a reality.



### *Life in Community*

The proverb refers to more than two *fau* (arched purlins) joined together to make up the wall-plate of the large house. In actual practice the wall-plate of the large house is formed of a strong combination of more than ten *fau*. The number of *fau* joined together depends on the design and authority of the chief carpenter. Samoan society lives a traditional communal life comprising five categories of people as identified below:

1. *tamaitai* (daughters of the village)
2. *aumaga* (untitled men)
3. *faletua ma tausí* (wives of *matai*)
4. *tamaiti* (young children)
5. *matai* (chiefs).<sup>9</sup>

All these groups have their special roles and duties. Each group has its own set of leaders who monitor the overall administration.

In a Samoan village structure, the *aumaga* (untitled men) are responsible to the *matai*, while the *auluma* (unmarried ladies) and wives of untitled men are responsible to the wives of chiefs. On the whole the wives of chiefs are responsible to the chiefs. The stability of a Samoan village depends on the roles of individuals in each circle. Each group represents an individual *fau* and when they cooperate and support one another's function, they make up a binding communal relationship. When they exist as one community, the proverb *Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* is also applied.

### **Conclusion**

With the introduction of this new model of contextual theology, Jesus Christ is seen as the new *fau* sent by God to continue God's mission of *fau*, 'creating'; *toe fau*, 'to recreate' and *toe faufau*, 'continuing to create and recreate' the world from the situation of chaos into a perfect order. God's purpose for sending the new *fau*, was to renew life and to give life to all creation. The important obligation for humanity is to sustain life.

Being a *fau* desires one to serve with humility, love and obedience. This is the design God carved and shaped through the Son (Pisopa, Hakai in an interview with the author, 19 January 2007). It's a kind of service that involves a service for others. Anthony T. Hanson claims, 'It is true of course that the servant of the Lord in Isaiah is always described as serving God, and not as serving others. But we have seen that the supreme example of service which Jesus gives consists in his giving of life for others'<sup>10</sup>. This true image of a servant is a good application for the twenty first century's missionary people.

*Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* is a metaphorical signpost to explain the imperative of continuing Christ's mission. This proverb is not a new saying in Samoan society, because it is well understood at family and village levels as well as the district and society as a whole. However, its cultural and religious significance speaks to the importance of theologising in contexts. It speaks of the imperative of continuing in the path that Christ has established through his gospel. The characteristic of the *fau* as soft yet having lasting fibres reflects also the character of a true disciple who serves with humility and diligence.

The application of the contextual theology of mission proposed sets the stage for God's mission to be continued and shaped in the church. Jesus Christ, the first *fau*, has set the example through his own life. The church is mandated to go out into the world to *fau* one another as Christ has demonstrated in his own ministry. Christ's mission entails our being in unity to ensure the continuity of God's mission. It is also the continuing of qualitative discipleship. If we manage to do likewise then the saying, *Ia so'o le fau ma le fau* has reached its practical realisation.



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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> E. Schultz, *Samoan Proverbial Expression: Alagaupu fa'a-Samoa* (Suva: Polynesian Press, 1980) p.vii

<sup>2</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigms Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991) p. 10

<sup>3</sup> G.B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 81

<sup>4</sup> Dr. W. Arthur Whistler, *Flowers of the Pacific Island Seashore* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992) p. 34

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Augustine Kramer, *The Samoa Islands, Vol. II.* (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1995) p. 271

<sup>6</sup> Fereti Tupua, *O le Suaga a le Vaatele (The Finding of the Big Canoe)* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2002) p. 274

<sup>7</sup> Jay E. Adams, *The Place of Authority in Christ's Church* (New Jersey: Timeless Texts, 1994) p. 10

<sup>8</sup> Hans Kung, *The Church* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967) p. 254ff

<sup>9</sup> Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, 'The Samoan Culture and Government. in Ron Crocombe, *Culture & Democracy in the South Pacific* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, The University of the South Pacific, 1992) p. 118

<sup>10</sup> Anthony T.Hanson, *The Church of the Servant* (London: SCM Press Ltd. 1962) p. 32



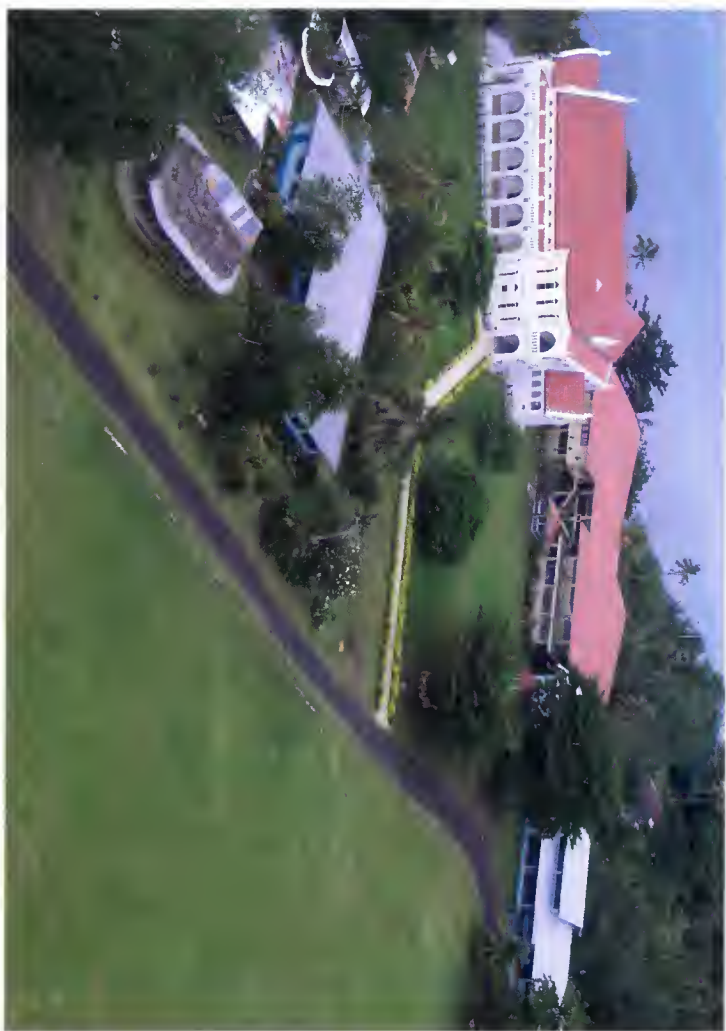
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*A recent aerial view of Piula Theological College  
in Lufilufi, Samoa*



by courtesy of Piula Theological College, 2009



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## The Use of Money and the Samoan Concept of *Fa'asoa*

### Introduction

The Samoan context and its cultural practices have significant bearings to that of John Wesley's sermon, 'The Use of Money'. In this account, the Samoan word used to explain the three rules as emphasised in Wesley's sermon is known as *fa'asoa*. It means to apportion; to distribute; or to divide out.<sup>1</sup> It is how a person manages what he/she has in hand for the necessities of life. Samoans manage to keep the same practice as what Wesley reflects in his sermon. It is an integral part of Samoan identity and thus evident in all aspects of traditional Samoan life and culture. The Samoan ideals and ways of life practised by its people are bound by love, sharing and caring. The principle emphasised in both Wesley's three rules and the Samoan concept of *fa'asoa* is life. Life as used in both contexts is communal life, in the sense that no one suffers or be excluded from the daily provisions.

### John Wesley's Sermon on the Use of Money

*Gain all you can...* by honest wisdom and unwearied diligence, the second rule of Christian prudence is *Save all you can...* Having first gained all you can, and secondly saved all you can, then *Give all you can...*<sup>2</sup>



Wesley appears first to have preached this sermon in 1744, and at the service, the collection was given to providing bread and clothing for the needy. He knew the content and message of his sermon would surely challenge church leaders, as they were also involved in abusing and misusing money. He was not negating the importance of money or economic development. His main concern was on the use of money. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. He realised that people must come to terms with the society in which they live, with all its faults. In turn, this implied dealing seriously with money-gaining it, saving it, and spending it, as good stewards exercising one's stewardship to the glory of God.<sup>3</sup> It must be used to meet the needs of the poor as in the case of struggling Methodists during the beginning of Methodism.

Wesley's whole concern is a stabilising factor and a function of society where everyone helps one another in every aspects of life. He also insists by presenting clearly in his teachings and sermons the danger of increasing riches when people desire to gain the whole world with its honor and glory rather than using their riches for the glory of God. Money or riches is not a problem by itself, but the misuse of it and the desire for more by those who possess it disclosed the danger. Wesley does not support the idea of accumulated funds where the rich become selfish with their increasing riches.<sup>4</sup>

## A Contextual Reflection

### *Fa'asoa: a Concept of Saving*

The concept of saving is best described by the Samoan term *tauga* (food surplus) which refers to a basket of provisions reserved for the next meal. Samoa is blessed with land, sea and weather that provide food all year round. Food is plentiful in Samoa and is one of the most important pastimes for its people. In fact, it is a priority in any cultural, church and family ceremonial occasion. Irrespective

of plentiful and convenience, it does not allow Samoans, especially the elderly people to waste Gods provisions. A *tauga* ensures that no food is wasted but also serves to remind us that we save for life. A *tauga* means, the next meal is guaranteed and is ready to be consumed or shared with others.

Samoans do save and store up as part of the culture. Like the *tauga*, the *ie toga* (fine mat) and *siapo* (*tapa*), native clothes made from the bark of a paper mulberry tree, are stored and saved. Unlike the *tauga* that is saved and consumed in the next meal, the spirit of saving and reserving for an occasion is applied to these cultural items. A Samoan way of saving refers to the contribution of fine mats, sleeping mats, *tapa* cloths, food, as well as physical manual assistance that is offered to neighbours, community, relatives and any other person in time of need.

In cultural practice, the *matai* is the one responsible for the whole *aiga*. The term *aiga* is used in a similar fashion as the English word 'family,' which is applied to all sorts of literal and metaphoric interpretations, ranging from the smallest unit of kinship in the relationship between the husband and wife to that of the extended family made up of members that are either related by blood or being adopted to the family (Malama Meleisea 1987:6). The *matai* is the custodian of the *aiga* estate and allocates rights to use sections of land for individual cultivation among members of the *aiga*.<sup>5</sup>

It is very important and unique in the *fa'a-Samoa* of how the Samoans lived in the past. At the heart of the Samoan culture is the extended family, not the nuclear family. Each extended family has a chiefly title which is associated with a particular village. At the head of every extended family is the *matai* titleholder, the chief. The *aiga* serves and respects its leader who is the *matai*. Within this setting, each has its own task to perform for the smooth running of the community. In that manner, they all contribute and play a vital role as equal



participants to ensure security, prosperity, and enough for the family needs, and services to others.

This form of relationship and co-existence among the *aiga* functions as guarantee for stability, peace and order at all times. When *fa'alavelave* (troubles or ceremonial occasions) arise like a funeral, wedding, and church dedication that requires material inputs and services from family members, a good *aiga* as described above would respond immediately without delay. It is a testimony to the ideal of saving, and being prepared to give in times of need. To save all that is noticed by their eating habit where they only eat what is afforded and available. At the same time, they reserved the best they receive to serve their *matai*. This is just the same as what Wesley's sermon preaches about savings. Samoan way of life as exemplified in the *fa'a-Samoa* shares many common features with Wesley's concerns on sharing. Samoans believe that God has gifted them with a unique culture that embraces *alofa* (love), *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *tautua* (service), *filemu* (peace), and *fealofani* (solidarity). These elements of the *fa'a-Samoa* demonstrate the parallels between Samoan life and Wesley's sermon.

## Samoan Expressions which Co-relate with John Wesley's Sermon

*E Tupu Mea Avea a e Le Tupu Mea Ten Pea*

This expression is translated as: 'things that one gives increase but those safely hidden will not.' This is not to be understood from an economic point of view, but in the sense that when one gives today, someone else will definitely respond. It is significant in the Samoan way that to give is a means of caring for others than just saving for no purpose. In the Samoan perspective and the way it is usually conducted, the *ali'i* (high chiefs), are the ones who are highly admired by everyone in community. They receive the best quality and the

highest *faa'alolaga* (gifts in any occasions conducted in the Samoan way). Other *matai* and people in community often seek assistance in any form of help from these high chiefs.

It is the task of high chiefs to share what they have with all in need for survival. What needs to be stated in this case is the contribution of Christianity to Samoa's concept of sharing. Based on the Christian understanding, the ultimate reality of sharing is exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ, the revelation of God. He shares his life not for prestige, but for the salvation of his people.

From a Christian perspective, sharing is not for self-glorification but it is done for the glory of God. It is not only a response to the human needs, but more so a human response from the heart to the love of God, whether it is individual or communal. Our being imperfect must not prevent us from following Jesus' example. Christianity does not discourage sharing, but gives it a new perspective by moving beyond mere reciprocal sharing, thus relating it to the life of Christ as the ultimate reality in sharing. It must be remembered that, sharing in Christ's way is without boundary. It seems that the present Christian teaching is greatly influenced by both economic and contextual realities. In many of his pastoral proclamations, Eminent Cardinal Taofinu'u Pio cautions the people to refrain from excessive celebrations, which unnecessarily put extra burdens on the people<sup>6</sup>. Any event, large or small, joyful or sorrowful, which affects the life of the community, is an opportunity for sharing.

*O Oe Nei a'o A'u Taeao (Your Turn is Today but Mine is Tomorrow)*

This is one of the most popular Samoan sayings that reflects the close relation between people. This saying is translated as 'Your turn is today but mine is tomorrow.' According to Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, he claims that, this saying literally refers to someone that is in need of something. He also states that, Samoans have that kindness of heart to give whatever is in hand even though he/she





gains it with difficulties or saves it for a special purpose, but love is above all.<sup>7</sup> It is a saying which portrays the whole essence of Wesley's sermon regarding the three rules. You earn as much as you can, save as much as you can, and give as much as you can. In times of struggle and nothing is in hand, Samoans ask for assistance from their families and neighbours.

It needs to be emphasised also that, Samoans have a strong and stable foundation based on the concept of *va fealoai* (relationship of respect). Seeking assistance by means of money, goods and services or in any other form can be carried out through the expression, *fa'amolemole* (please). To borrow, lend or be given something to use in any form of occasion is a prerogative for every Samoan to let go to the one asking, based on the *fa'amolemole* practice which highlights the significance of people's relationship. The borrower always receives what he/she needs because *fa'aaloalo* (respect) is the fundamental concept that lies at the heart of the *fa'a Samoa*. When Jesus invites his disciples to love one another, the Samoan word used is *fealofani* (solidarity). Its meaning includes respect, honour, service, trust, honesty and justice. It implies mutual bonds of relationship, family, and covenant, expressed in ethical, social, cultural and religious commitments.

The sense of sharing helps explain why a Samoan seriously takes into account the contributions of his/her *aiga* and the community when he/she speaks, or thinks, about his/her personal achievements or rewards.<sup>8</sup> Even in the church whereby each member has been influenced by the society which raises them. Unfortunately the Samoan culture is the key figure which shapes the whole of its society.

Relationship between the Samoan Context and John Wesley's Sermon Wesley's three rules, 'Gain all you can, Save all you can, and Give all you can, are still relevant and have meaning for Samoan Methodists as well as society at large. Within the Samoan context, sharing does not depend on the availability of material wealth. In other words, sharing

is not contingent on having something to give. And sharing does not happen just on occasions, which attract public attention such as *saofai* (installation of a *matai* title), weddings, and funerals and so on. If a family does not have any appropriate material things to give for an occasion, one or more members will be appointed to go to help the family who hosts the occasion. In Samoa, the presence of one's relatives or friends in time of bereavement is far more important than staying away because there is nothing to give.<sup>9</sup>

Consequently, Samoan people do not accumulate or save wealth, but they give, earn and share. The whole aim of this practice is to create awareness and protection so that no one suffers emotionally or physically. For example, when a fishing party returns, it is the duty of the master fisherman to see the catch of the others distributed equally amongst their fellow fishermen. The master fisherman scoops the fishes from his and the other's catch with the back of the paddle and gives them out to those with the less catch. Another form of distributing fish calls *aleaga* carries the same emphasis. The motive behind this distributing aspect is based on the Samoan philosophy, *o oe nei a'o a'u taeao*, literally translated 'you today and me tomorrow'. The master fisherman knows well that he is never perfect, he may share today and, one of his fishing mates will share with him tomorrow.

#### *Tautua Matavela and Tautua Matapalapâlâ*

*Tautua matavela* consists of two separate words: *tautua* (service) and *matavela* (burnt face). It is similar to another type of service called *tautua matapalapâlâ*. *Tautua* meaning service and *matapalapâlâ* is translated as dirty face. The two notions of *tautua matavela* and *tautua matapalapâlâ* portray the image of a servant whose face is filled with sweat, dirt and redness from the heat of the fire while performing his responsibilities for the *matai*. This image is often seen when performing particular tasks such as preparing *umu* (underground oven to cook food) and any other food cooked for the *matai's* meal, or



even working at the plantation. This way of giving explains the character of a person who gives the best of his ability and strength to serve the *matai*. Most importantly, it is also a sacrificial act. It is an act that is supported and encouraged by the Samoan proverbial saying, 'O le ala i le pule o le tautua,' (The path to glory is through service).

#### *Giving in the Samoan Perspective of Tautua Matapalapala*

The *tautua* (servant) also undertakes other tasks apart from just serving the *matai*. He has to look after the whole family and to deal with the needs of every individual (Simanu 2002:112). This simply means that he is responsible for providing a plantation and looking after the pigs. Land belongs to the family and especially the kitchen which is his place to give life for the family. He has to cook and feed the whole family with whatever food he attained from the sea or land. The *tautua* gives all he has to serve the *matai* and the family. This *tautua* is also done when the village *matai* gather for a meeting and all the *taulele'a* (untitled-men) provide food for them. They play their role of giving the best service and the best ability to prepare food to maintain the strength of their chiefs while discussing issues for the benefit of the whole community and village. This act of giving is expressed through the inner being of a *tautua* as he strives for the best he could to satisfy the needs of humanity. Most of all love is the core element in performing this task.

#### *Gaining is a Reward Achieved through Tautua Matavela*

When an old chief dies, a new one is chosen through the consensus of all the extended family members, residing in other villages and islands as well. Consideration is given to a candidate according to the closeness of his connection and his service to the family. This is the original Samoan system of how chiefs become heirs to chiefly titles. Other *matai* titles that are approved by the chiefs in order to assist them with the job are selected from those (*tautua*) who have long served the chief/s.

After all the years of serving the *matai*, (high chief) blessings are gained by the servant, both physically and spiritually. The *tautua* (good servant) is granted a *matai* title by the chief. The high chief always blesses him with a saying 'Ia faamannua le Atua i lou tulai mai i le tofi ma ia alofa i le nuu ma le ekalesia.' This literally means 'Love your village and the church and may the blessings of the Lord be upon you.' He gains his position due to his service and his loyalty to his master (*matai*). It is a token of appreciation for what he has contributed to the *matai* and the whole family (Tuiatua, 1986:15). The servant is crowned by what he has sowed for the high chief and family members.

He gains knowledge and experiences of life because he walks according to the path of being a servant. On the other hand, he knows how to talk in front of people and manages to handle problems that arise from time to time.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, being a *matai* to him is not a difficult post because he knows what the entire family needs. He listens to the concerns of his family and village community.

## Conclusion

Most importantly, the voice of the *fa'asoa* is heard and accepted by families and the community as a whole because he is a loyal servant. His decisions are based on the concept of love. He advocates for peace and harmony, and promotes these in every aspect of human life. Therefore, being a good *fa'asoa* manages a good living in whatever occasion that arises. It is an interesting concept that includes the three rules set up by Wesley in his sermon. For example, whenever you hear a saying or someone being called a good *faasoa*, the characteristics of good stewardship come to mind. He manages to control the three aspects of saving, earning and giving in life. He has abundance in savings, earnings and also gives the best he/she has when any occasion arises. Apparently, popularity and credibility are always in his/her character and is mostly admired by people and friends. Therefore, the *tautua* will give, save and earn all they have for the betterment of their families, village and church.



Jesus Christ is God's *fa'asoa* to the world. He became the suffering servant in order for humanity to have life. He shared his life so that the church and all of God's people may become good *fa'asoa* to one another. As the Pacific struggles to survive the effects of globalisation, we are reminded to re-examine our meanings of *fa'asoa*. Does it reflect love, sharing and caring?

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1962) p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Albert C. Outler, ed. *John Wesley's Sermon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) pp. 263-280.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Baker, 'Wesley's Principles for Social Action' *Good News* . January/February 1985. <http://www.goodnewsmag.org/library/article/baker-jf85.htm> (16 January 2008)

<sup>4</sup> John Wesley, *John Wesley's Sermon: an Anthology* ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heizenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991)

<sup>5</sup> Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the Modern History of Western Samoa* (Suva: Fiji Times Ltd., 1987) p.7

<sup>6</sup> Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (Suva: Donna Lou Kamu, 1996) p.55

<sup>7</sup> Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, Personal Interview 15 September, 2007

<sup>8</sup> Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (Suva: Donna Lou Kamu, 1996) p.55

<sup>9</sup> Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (Suva: Donna Lou Kamu, 1996) p. 54

<sup>10</sup> Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, Personal Interview 26 November, 2007

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### **Mose Mailo**

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## **An Exegesis of John 2:1-11: Jesus' Attitude towards Women**

### **Introduction**

This exegetical study brings out various insights about the transformative nature of Jesus' ministry according to the Gospel of John. Emphasis is given to the interpretation of the involvement of Jesus' mother. This exegesis concludes with the belief that Jesus' transformation of the existing values and ways of humanity into a new God created community includes the transformation of the place and role of women into a new existence.

Biblical scholars tend to focus their interpretations of this particular event on Jesus' part within the story. The purpose is to understand the exact meaning of his words and acts, according to the context. It is part of the process of knowing who Jesus is as well as the purpose of his ministry. Jesus was acting in a real and concrete situation. He was with people within a household. Despite Rudolph Bultmann's view that Jesus speaks only of his own person as the revealer whom God has sent,<sup>1</sup> there is a possible relationship of the revealer and the recipients of such revelation. This relationship makes the revealer's purpose very effective. In this very first sign, the revealer's encounter with a woman within a



wedding scene brings vividness to the discussion of his attitude towards women.

## A. The Wedding as the Respective Background of the Sign

*John 2: 1- "And on the third day..."*

The question of 'when it happened?' makes me feel that we are dealing with a historical analysis of the narrative. Likewise is the view of Theodore of Mopsuestia that counts this day as the third day after the baptism of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Similar is C. K. Barrett's discussion of this day in relation to the first Passover, therefore this day is the third day from the first call.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars refer to this third day as a symbol of the resurrection. The other gospel writers, (Matthew, Mark and Luke) only mention the third day in relation to Jesus' resurrection. (C.f. Matt.16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Mk. 9:31; 10:34; Lk. 9:22; 13:32; 24:7; 24:21; 24:46). However in John, it is only mentioned as an introduction to the sign (2:1), and never again all throughout the gospel. The use of the third day in the first verse introduces the nature of the sign within John's purpose as well as the opening event in Jesus' ministry. The nature of this sign is also identical to the nature of the resurrection. It is the glorification of Jesus Christ. Even though the story does not come to the end, Jesus Christ is already glorified and made Lord over the world.

*Verse 1b - "A marriage occurred in Cana of Galilee..."*

Greek; ἀγάμῃ: wedding, marriage

The word marriage is preferable in this work. It spells out the essential part of the wedding that is the union of the two, man and woman. Wedding refers to the whole occasion of festivities. The background of the first sign is a marriage. Jesus' instructions about marriage are found primarily in the Synoptic gospels (Matt. 5:31f; 19:3-12; Mk.10:2-12; Lk.16:18). Instead of disputing the Pharisees about the Old



Testament practices in marriage and divorce, Jesus directs them to the true nature of marriage as found in Genesis 2:24. Man and woman are created to become one flesh, a unity created by God, so that a permanent union may result (Matt. 19:5f). Leslie Newbigin regards the wedding as an accepted symbol of the joy of God's reign, linking the same theme to the wine as a symbol of joy.<sup>4</sup> This is a possible explanation, but the central part of the wedding (which is in fact the union of the two in marriage) is more than joy. It is a commitment, in the form of sacrifice and unity.

The use of ἀνίσταμαι is grammatically an aorist, in its constative form. That means it has the capacity to be all embracing. It points to the situation of marriage and place of marriage which is Cana in Galilee. Scholars have been trying to locate the geographical position of Cana. The important point here is that the marriage as the opening event in Jesus' ministry is not happening within Judea. The ministry of Jesus begins in Galilee, his hometown. It locates the marriage within a family/home setting, as this is an essential element in the context of Jewish life. It is the basic unit of their culture and religion. Marriage determines the place of one of the partners; the woman. Even though there are high ideals set forth for the relationship, marriage still means that a woman becomes the property of the man.<sup>5</sup> This is obvious enough to inform us that marriage in the Jewish context is not a union to become one flesh, but to become two pieces of flesh.

*Verse 1c - "And the mother of Jesus was there."*

This is the first mention of Jesus' mother in John.<sup>6</sup> Whenever the term mother (μήτηρ) appears, other types of domestic duties such as child-caring, cooking, house-keeping, and sewing come to mind. John never names the mother of Jesus. This is an indication of Mary's place as a mother. He uses the title in 2:12; 6:42 and 19:25ff. According to apocryphal tradition Mary was the aunt of the bridegroom. This is to be associated with the tradition that Salome, mother of John was Mary's sister.<sup>7</sup> However, in my own interpretation of the text,





the title presented by John has two focal points. First, the title used by the evangelist tells us of Jesus' family connections. She was his mother. This can be one of the evangelist's affirmations of the humanity of Jesus Christ. He has a mother, therefore he belongs to a family. He was born of a woman and he is part of a household.  $\acute{\omicron}\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\omicron}$  indicates a genitive case which may be used partitively to signify that of which something forms a part. The emphasis given by John to the mother of Jesus expresses the interrelatedness between Jesus and his mother. It is an emphasis on family relationships.

Secondly, the title given to Mary presents her place and role within the network of the Jewish society. She is like other women of the society. Therefore the title is an indication of her status as a woman with her roles limited to motherhood.

*Verse 2 – "And Jesus and his disciples also were invited to the marriage."*

A literal translation of this verse from the Greek text may be read, 'Jesus and the disciples of him were invited to the marriage'.  $\acute{\alpha}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\omicron}$  (of Him) indicates another genitive case used partitively. It is the expression of another belongingness. This time, the disciples belong to Jesus. It is a new form of relationship, a Master-Disciple relationship. It is not contrasted to the family relationship, but it is a progress of human connections. Jesus' presence at this occasion indicates his approval of marriage.<sup>8</sup> However, it becomes more than just an approval. His presence with his disciples (a new type of relationship) is thus indicating a new meaning of marriage.  $\acute{\alpha}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\omicron}$  (was invited) roots from  $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\alpha}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\omicron}$ , which means to call by means of invitation. Therefore, Jesus and his disciples are guests at the marriage. It is an act of participation, which involves an acceptance of the invitation. Again, participation and involvement indicate Jesus' presence in the communal life of his hometown.

Marriage is the proper setting of this sign. It is the marriage occasion that draws all the people involved, including Jesus. There is the

atmosphere of happiness, joy and celebration. It culminates in the creation of a new family, consisting of man and woman. Marriage, therefore as a background of this particular sign, presents the joy entailed in the created order, for both men and women. Also, Jesus' presence marks the beginning of a new creation where men and women are seen as equal partners.

## B. Mary Takes the Initiative

*Verse 3a – "And being short of wine..."*

In a very brief arrangement of words, the evangelist now poses the problem. I prefer to take up the longer reading cited by Brown, "Now they have no wine, for the wine provided for the feast had been used up".<sup>9</sup> Barclay clearly explains that for a Jewish feast, wine is essential. Without wine, there is no joy, according to the *Rabbis*. At any time, the failure of provisions would have been a problem, for hospitality in the East is a sacred duty; but for the provisions to fail at a wedding would be a terrible humiliation for the married couple.<sup>10</sup>

*Verse 3b – "The mother of Jesus says to him, they have no wine."*

It is not clear how Jesus' mother knew about the shortage of wine. If no one informs her, then those hypotheses that place the mother of Jesus as a relative of the bridegroom are correct. Mary's concern shows the anxiety of someone who really belongs to the family. However, Mary's concern and initiative in searching for more wine, reminds us of one of the characteristics of a mother. She is always concerned for the well being of her family. So I interpret the initiative of Mary as a motherly appeal. She takes the initiative to solve the crisis by informing someone whom she relies upon. So instead of breaking Jewish law regarding a woman's place in society, she appeals directly to her own son. For a woman in Judaism is always under the jurisdiction of her father, husband, eldest son or nearest male relative.<sup>11</sup> In this case, Jesus is the eldest son from the perspective of his mother.



Therefore, Mary in this particular event represents the place of all women in Judaism. It reveals their inferiority to men and their concern as mothers who are responsible mainly for the well being of the home. This interpretation supports the views of other scholars cited by Brown, that there is no evidence in Mary's request of the expectation of a miracle. She is simply reporting the desperate situation.<sup>12</sup> The evangelist straightforwardly reports what Mary said to her son, "... they have no wine."

Mary's concern is very important, for it shows us two things: First, she appeals to Jesus as her own son, in terms of a mother-son family relationship. Secondly, she does not understand who this son is. This misunderstanding by the mother of Jesus points us to a further analysis of Jesus' response to his mother in the next verse.

### C. Jesus' Response: A Concern from Above

*Verse 4a – "What to me and to you, Woman?"*

ὅε αὐτῇ ἐὰν οἴε ἄδϊάέ is literally translated as 'What to me and to you woman?' A semitism with a variety of translations. Jesus' use of ἄδϊάέ is an unusual address to one's mother.<sup>13</sup> The Greek fathers interpret this as a rebuke of Mary (Brown 1966:99),<sup>14</sup> while most of the modern scholars agree that it is not a rebuke. Barrett claims that there is no harshness or disrespect in the vocative ἄδϊάέ, as examples show.<sup>15</sup>

Barclay provides a very possible explanation in which he concludes that, we have no way of speaking in English which exactly renders ἄδϊάέ, but it is better to translate it 'Lady', which includes at least a sense of courtesy.<sup>16</sup> I have commented on Mary's appeal to Jesus as that of a mother to her son. This shows Mary's lack of understanding of Jesus and of course herself, which is a matter of concern to Jesus in the light of his revealing ministry. He is beginning to speak of his own person as the revealer whom God has sent.<sup>17</sup> Thus, it is far

more than just a family relationship. Jesus' use of that unusual title (*ἡ μήτηρ*) rather than mother, indicates that he respects his mother, and he now shifts the level of understanding their relationship, to that of his relationship with his disciples, as this is the first occasion in which they (Jesus and his disciples) attend as Master-Disciples Team.

Jesus' response to Mary then, is not only a normal human response, but a concern from above. This leads us to a better understanding of why Jesus said, "What to me and to you woman?" It is a comparison of their simple compassion and fidelity to family relationships with Mary's place as a woman of limited opportunities. Mary's concern is from within the structures of her society. In contrast to Jesus' concern, this is clearly expressed when Jesus says, "My hour has not yet come."

*Verse 4b – "My hour has not yet come."*

We must interpret this phrase in the light of two considerations: (1) Jesus is presently responding to his mother; and (2) Jesus is pointing beyond the story time of the gift of the wine. Firstly, Jesus is responding to Mary in a prophetic sense. He is presently revealing to a woman the two things that have not yet come. This hour is not within the sphere of human wishes, but under the control of God. When that particular hour arrives, good news for women would come since the hour is presently revealed to a woman. Secondly, the 'not yet' of the hour remains outside the time of the sign. On this ground, I agree with Brown and Moloney that the plotted time of the hour points towards Jesus' death and resurrection.<sup>18</sup>

This is the first appearance of a theme that will develop as the gospel unfolds. Within the gospel itself, the hour will be the time of Jesus' death (7:6, 30; 12:27), his glorification (12:23; 13:31) and return to the Father (13:1, 32; 17:5). Thus, the events of Cana set in motion a tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet', which marks a public ministry moving towards the coming of the hour.<sup>19</sup>



## D. Mary and the Servants: Paradigms of Faith

*Verse 5a – “His mother says to the servants...”*

Äéâíüé is not the most natural word for household servants. It may have been used here to recall the activity of deacons in pagan and Christian cults.<sup>20</sup> A third party is introduced into the scene, the servants. Here they are in communication with the mother of Jesus. It is not clear whether what happens in this passage is heard and known by everyone in the wedding feast. But it seems that only Mary and the servants are aware of what Jesus is going to perform (compare with verse 9).

*Verse 5b – “Whatever he says to you, do it.”*

Whatever is in Mary’s mind about Jesus’ response, “she seems to have no doubt that Jesus will intervene, and is uncertain only about the manner of intervention”.<sup>21</sup> Her response is the authentic response of faith. Her need is wholly subservient to his, “Do whatever he tells you” is not an apathetic resignation; it is expectant faith.<sup>22</sup> In this part of the sign, the evangelist clearly portrays two types of faith: Mary’s expectant faith and the servants’ obedient faith.

(i) Mary’s expectant faith:

This simple act of faith by the mother of Jesus is from her full reliance upon him as a son. She expects that her son acknowledges her concern and will do something. This expectant faith comes from the mother-son relationship. At the same time it spells out the place of women within the Jewish family life. They are always expected to rely upon someone else, especially the opposite sex for guidance and leadership.

(ii) The servants’ obedient faith:

The household servants’ obedience in verse 7 and 8 is a surprise. Mary directs them to this act of obedience to every word of Jesus. This is blind obedience. They just obey without asking or hesitating

with full reliance upon a woman's expectations. However, it is obedience that leads to faith.

### E. Water into Wine: A Transformative Change

*Verse 6a – "And there were six stone water pots standing, according to the purification of the Jews..."*

Stone vessels are especially suitable for water used for purifying purposes.<sup>23</sup> However it may be questioned whether John intends for any particular purification.<sup>24</sup> The number six is symbolic. Brown and Barrett indicate that it stands for imperfection, of the Jewish law. I prefer Bultmann's interpretation of this water in particular,

..the water stands for everything that is a substitute for the revelation, everything by which a man thinks he can live and which yet fails him when put to the test.<sup>25</sup>

Maybe Bultmann's interpretation is too general, but it is effective and it is also the reality of the whole nature of Jesus' ministry. When this interpretation is applied to the text itself, (whether intended by Bultmann or not) the water then stands for the Jewish understanding of the wedding, their treatment of women, and family relationships. According to Jewish explanation of their law, they think that it is God's will for them to live with their present attitudes towards women.

*Verse 6b – "Each containing two or three measures"*

Before the feast, the master comments on the quality of the wine, the end of this verse indicates the quantity in the first place. Brown provides a comparative modern measure of about eight gallons,<sup>26</sup> but Barrett's measure is about hundred and twenty gallons in all.<sup>27</sup> Whatever calculations, the important point is the sufficiency of what Jesus has provided.





*Verse 7 – “Jesus says to them, Fill the water pots with water, and they filled them to (the) top”*

This verse makes it impossible to regard verse four as a refusal to take any action.<sup>28</sup> But it is not only the request of Jesus’ mother that is to be satisfied in this action. Mary takes the initiative, but Jesus acts on his own depending upon the one who sent him. Therefore Jesus’ action implies that his glory is about to be revealed in this particular event. *àò áù* C.f. verse 10 *àò áñôé*; but *àò* is much more commonly used with an adverb of time than an adverb of place.<sup>29</sup> So it is the time of God, to reveal his glory, and not according to the time of man.

*Verse 8 – “And he says to them, now draw out and carry to the master of the feast...”*

Draw out is possibly used to refer to the act of drawing water from a well.<sup>30</sup> This leads to the suggestion that it was a well and not the jars that was the source of water.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, if the evangelist purposely uses this particular word that belongs to the well rather than the jars, then it serves to point to Jesus as the living well.

*Verse 9 & 10 – “...and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’”*

The master of the banquet, indicates someone with a respected place within the wedding. According to the evangelist, the master of the feast doesn’t know where the wine had come from. He acknowledges the quality of the wine, that only the servants and Mary know. This is a proof that the miracle is done only within the circle of Jesus, the servants and a woman, the mother of Jesus. If we rank the people at the wedding according to social status of Jewish culture, then the servants and Jesus’ mother (as a woman) are the lowest in this context.

The central aspect of the Cana narrative lies with the changing of the water into wine. It is not basically a change of matter, but a change with a spiritual meaning. It is the changing of normal water into another liquid form, which is wine. The preferable term for this change according to this article is 'transformation'. It is the transformation of the existing ways of men into the newly created ways of God. In the context of John, this transformation is not pointed towards an individual in the first place, but to the whole community. Transformation has a communal implication.

In this particular act of Jesus, the truth about God is revealed. The presence of Jesus is a transformation of the old into the new.<sup>32</sup> This old order is no longer acceptable to God. Jesus' transformative ministry is a sign of the creativity of God.

## F. The Meaning of glory in this particular sign

*Verse 11a – "The beginning of the signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee."*

The first thing to be noticed in this part is that the purpose of a sign is to "point people to the truth that Jesus is the divine Son of God come down from heaven".<sup>33</sup> In fact, the nature of the truth is open to be explored in the light of this particular event. This leads us to more discussion, because this is the first sign. *ἀρχή* in John, this may mean more than the first of a series of signs. It is not merely the first sign but a preliminary sign, being representative of the creative and transforming work of Jesus as a whole.<sup>34</sup>

*Verse 11b – "And revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him."*

The present sign is clearly a manifestation of the glory of God (in Jesus), in which the disciples believe in Jesus. This is of course the conclusion of this sign. In a critical analysis of the whole sign, it seems that it is about how the glory of Jesus is revealed. Certainly in this sign, the changing of water into wine is where the glory is apparent.



If that is the case, then the 'glory' that is revealed is a "practical glory". A glory that works to change things and it is exactly what Jesus has done. If only the revelation of Jesus as the revealer of God is the truth, then this truth may not be a practical one. This means that the purpose of incarnation is defeated, because God becoming a human is not real in relation to the lives of those involved. The end of the narrative is patriarchal. The glory is revealed and the disciples believed in Jesus as if that glory is only for the male disciples. This raises a question, for there is no mention of one of the disciples during the changing of water into wine. Only Mary and the servants were involved (verses 4-10).

I propose that the belief of the disciples in v.11 is the addition of an editor, for it is out of order according to the content of the narrative. The faith of Mary and the servants are not acknowledged for a patriarchal reason. So to do justice to the content of the narrative, it shall be read, "...And revealed his glory, and his mother and the servants believed in him" (v.11).

## Conclusion

The Cana narrative reveals Jesus as the transformer of water into wine, and his ministry all throughout this particular gospel is the transformation of the things that mankind thinks he can live by, but yet failed him according to the presence of Jesus. The evangelist's selection of this important episode of a woman's dialogue with Jesus implies that the transforming ministry of Jesus includes the transformation of the role of women in the faith community.

This exegesis concludes with two aspects about women prior to the involvement of the mother of Jesus, and the wedding as the respective background of the sign:

◆ Women's place and role in the existing society is limited to motherhood, that means that they are inferior to men, and this inferiority shapes their minds to be concerned with only the maternal side of their existence.

◆ Jesus prophesies to his mother that the hour will come where he himself will provide them with a new meaning in their existence.

In the first instance, the impact of the Cana narrative on the whole context of the gospel is apparent. This impact is in respect to the ministry of Jesus as the transformer of the present society, and in fact the place and role of women in particular. On the way to the hour of Jesus, John clearly presents an episode involving a woman as an anticipation of their not yet come hour of transformation; the resurrection. This transformation presupposes the transformation of the place and role of women.

The transformation approach according to the gospel of John is God's purpose of revealing his creativity through Jesus Christ. This includes the transformation of attitudes towards the place and role of women from what is accepted by humankind, to what is willed by God. Transformation is a radical change through the power of God. It is like a football game where the coach keeps the same team, but changes the game plan for an effective play. The same idea applies to the situation of women. To recognise the importance of women is to introduce a new game plan for an effective ministry today. Thus, this approach is an affirmation, in the light of Christ and of what is meant to be a church. It calls for a critical evaluation of roles and relationships within churches so that they may not be determined by sex and gender, but by faith in God alone. Relationships in this case are crucial, for it is the fibre of communal living. The church as a community of faith can never be a transformed community as long as there are barriers between men and women. Since the

transformation approach is rooted in the creativity of God, therefore any transformation also depends on the power of God.

(This article is the edited version of an extract from  
Rev. Dr. Mose Mailo's BD Thesis).

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## Notes

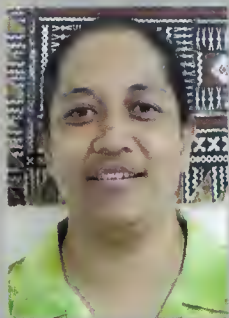
- <sup>1</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, (New York: Charles Scribners, 1955) p.4
- <sup>2</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-12*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966) p.97
- <sup>3</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Second edition, (London: SPCK, 1978) p.190
- <sup>4</sup> Leslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1987) p.27
- <sup>5</sup> Philip Siddons, *Speaking Out for Women: A Biblical View*, (New York: Judson Press, 1980) p.42
- <sup>6</sup> Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, *Women's Bible Commentary*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1988) p.383
- <sup>7</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-12*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966) p.98
- <sup>8</sup> Philip W. Comfort and Wendell C. Hawley, *Opening the Gospel of John*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale, 1994) p.30
- <sup>9</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-12*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966) p.98
- <sup>10</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*. Vol 1. Rev. Edition, The Daily Study Bible Series, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975) p.97
- <sup>11</sup> Philip Siddons, *Speaking Out for Women: A Biblical View*, (New York: Judson Press, 1980) p.41
- <sup>12</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-12*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966) p.98
- <sup>13</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary on John*. Vol. 36 (Texas: Word Books, 1987) p.34
- <sup>14</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-12*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966) p.99

- <sup>15</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Second edition, (London: SPCK, 1978) p.191
- <sup>16</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*. Vol 1. Rev. Edition, The Daily Study Bible Series, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975) p.8
- <sup>17</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, (New York: Charles Scribners, 1955) p.4
- <sup>18</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-12*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966) pp. 99-100 and Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) p. 82-84
- <sup>19</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) p.82
- <sup>20</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Second edition, (London: SPCK, 1978) p.191
- <sup>21</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-12*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966) p.100
- <sup>22</sup> Leslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1987) p.27
- <sup>23</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Second edition, (London: SPCK, 1978) p.191
- <sup>24</sup> ditto, p.192
- <sup>25</sup> ditto
- <sup>27</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Second edition, (London: SPCK, 1978) p.192
- <sup>28</sup> ditto
- <sup>29</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Second edition, (London: SPCK, 1978) p.192
- <sup>30</sup> ditto
- <sup>31</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-12*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966) p.100
- <sup>32</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1983) p.71
- <sup>33</sup> Philip W. Comfort and Wendell C. Hawley, *Opening the Gospel of John*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale, 1994) p.33
- <sup>34</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Second edition, (London: SPCK, 1978) p.193



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## Conscientisation and Pacific Women

### Introduction

Paulo Freire's 'emancipatory learning' methodology cannot be literally adapted to the context of women in the Pacific, because it was designed originally for the specific purpose of teaching peasants in Brazil to read, in order to vote and become decision-makers in their country. It is also applied to a context of illiterate people where there is a great disparity between the rich and the poor. In the Pacific situation, most people can read and write, and the inequality between the rich and poor is not so obvious. However, there are certain dehumanising forces that trap women in servitude and foster non-participation in groups and decision-making.

This article proposes that a model of liberation which will enhance and empower women's lives can be discovered through the use of Freire's philosophy of liberating education. This article also aims to move beyond Freire's philosophy, and to suggest that it is our personal encounter with Jesus Christ that brings about full liberation of our total being in our relationships with one another and especially our relationship with God.



## A Proposed Model of Liberation

The aim of Freire's model of liberation is to empower people through the process of self-awareness or consciousness raising. It is a creative way of empowering people to think for themselves, so that what they learn becomes authenticated in their lives. This includes the sharing of ideas, debates, dialogue, discussion, and working with others as subjects rather than as objects. Freire, in his educational philosophy, advocates that 'Education is the key to liberation'.

For Paulo Freire, education is never neutral. It is "political" in the sense that its main objective is either to maintain the status quo, or to educate for liberation. Through his experiences Paulo Freire developed a philosophy of education which could be adapted to liberate people from any inhumane situation. This philosophy aimed at bringing about radical social, political and economic changes for the poor and oppressed of the Third World, as they became actively engaged in achieving their own liberation.

Regardless of the criticisms of Freire's model as being revolutionary and basically a pedagogy (Jovili Meo 1989: 97), its practical implementation in various settings may enhance women's participation and deepen reflection on their spiritual lives, particularly in relation to the Bible study model introduced. In support of this stance, it is my contention that the utilization of Freire's model in designing liberating Bible studies for women's groups will open up new means of enhancing participation and spiritual development for Pacific women. This methodology will take as its starting point the development of women's inner selfhood. It will be designed to make women feel affirmed, build their confidence and self-respect, unleash their creativity, and make them feel energised and joyous; in other words it would empower them (Khamia Bhasin 1992:21-2).



Freire's method highlights the importance of the following concepts: generative themes, dialogue, problem posing, conscientisation and praxis.

### *Generative Themes*

Freire's methodology starts with a 'listening survey', in order to uncover what matters most to people. As the survey is one of the most important parts of the whole process, it is important that it be handled by a perceptive and sensitive team (Hope and Timmel 1984:13). This kind of survey is basically informal 'listening' to unstructured conversations between people. For Freire's context this constituted listening to the unstructured conversations between illiterate peasants. Freire and his team primarily listened in these conversations, in which the people were encouraged to feel relaxed and to talk about the things that they, as peasants, were most concerned about, and in informal settings where they feel most comfortable (Hope and Timmel 1984:13).

In the process of listening, Abraham Maslow's model of the hierarchy of human needs is suggested as a guide for listening effectively, because these are the five basic human needs around which people share deep feelings. These needs are: 1) Physical needs; 2) Safety and Security; 3) Love and Belonging; 4) Self-respect; and 5) Personal Growth (1954:chapter 4).

Once the 'generative themes' have emerged, the next step is to look at the economic, political and cultural aspects of the problem. This may be done using 'codes' such as pictures, slides or discussion outlines, which re-present the problem to the participants in a live and creative manner. Once the participants name the problem the next step is to 'critically analyse' its themes by using a problem-posing approach. This approach stimulates critical thinking among the participants and goes further to name the root of the problem identified. Hope and Timmel explain this part of the method as involving six stages:





Stage 1 is the 'Description of the Code.'

Stage 2 is the 'First Analysis.'

Stage 3 is the 'Real Life.'

Stage 4 is 'Related Problems.'

Stage 5 is 'Root Causes of the Problem.'

Stage 6 is 'Action Planning'(1984:58).

In identifying the root causes of the problem, participants become more aware of its ramifications and together can continue to work towards its transformation through action and reflection. This moment of 'awakening' is the heart of Freire's methodology of conscientisation. This same process has been adapted as part of the pedagogical system of liberating those who are victims of oppressive systems in a variety of contexts.

Freire refers to the words that people use to name their reality as "generative words." These are the deepest feelings and concerns of the people. These words are further developed into what he calls "generative themes." This concept stemmed from the concrete situation of educating illiterate people in Freire's native country of Brazil. Freire's goal in this situation was to develop an approach to adult literacy in which people actively participate in their own process of learning to read and write.

Once the generative themes are expressed the next step is to create "codifications," or a set of picture-scenes which portray problems typical of the situation of the group, each described by a generative word (Douglas E. Wingeier 1980:564). By looking at the pictures the people would learn to recognise the word and name the reality in which the word is used. For Freire, the central generative theme of the people he was working with was domination. This theme perpetuates dehumanisation, which is the opposite of Freire's educational focus. Freire's overall aim in his literacy programme is therefore more than just enabling people to read. It is to humanise

people's world through the process of critical thinking, so that they become empowered and motivated with a new sense of confidence and trust in themselves:

In the process they de-mythologised their world, i.e. became able to penetrate and expose the myths by which their oppressors had interpreted reality to them, and then re-mythologised it in terms of the generative words and themes by which they came to perceive and interpret it through their conscientised eyes (Wingeier 1980:564-5).

### *Dialogue*

Another fundamental aspect of Freire's liberating approach is dialogue. Here the influence of Martin Buber, a German-Jewish philosopher, is relevant. In his work, *I and Thou*, Buber explains that relating dialogically to nature, to people or to one's fellows and to God is the hallmark of an authentic and responsible life (Haim Gordon 1977:584). Buber reviews the world and individuals in a bipolar fashion, as either having an "I-IT" or an "I-THOU" relationship. The I-IT archetype typifies a relationship where one becomes the object and the other the subject. It is a dominating relationship where one has more value than the other. The I-THOU relationship is the model of genuine dialogue, where one affirms the value of the other.

In line with Buber's description of the I-THOU relationship is feminist theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz's description of dialogue in the context of the liberation of Hispanic women. She notes, "Dialogue is a horizontal relationship between equals which involves communication and intercommunication." (1993:71). For Isasi-Diaz, as for Freire, dialogue is made possible by the "word." The true word is constituted by the interaction of action and reflection, so that to speak the true word is to transform the world. It is the ability to speak and recognise the equal potential in the other person.



Likewise, Freire envisions dialogue as being for the sole purpose of humanisation in love, humility and faith in human relations. Dialogue also requires an intense faith in human beings; their power to make and remake, to create and recreate, faith that the vocation to be fully human is the birth right of all people, not the privilege of an elite (Freire 1985a:62). In short, dialogue entails learning the art of speaking and listening. This term is often mistaken as just mere talking or discussion, but, in reality, involves active listening in a spirit of openness and love toward the other person as well as speaking from the heart. Freire explicates the difference forcefully:

And since dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are stressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanised, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's "depositing" ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by the discussants. Nor yet is it a hostile, polemical argument between men [women] who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of the truth (1985a:77).

### *Problem Posing*

In contrast to the banking model of education, where information is deposited into people, Freire proposed a problem-posing model of education, to enhance critical thinking through dialogue. In his approach, learners are viewed as capable of being thinking, creative people with the capacity for action (Hope and Timmel 1984:9). They are recognised as conscious beings and are encouraged to value their contributions as important.

In Freire's problem-posing method of education, the emphasis is not on "having" but on "being." By showing each person that his/her very reason for existence is to transform, this method develops both self-confidence and the ability to examine life critically (Bruce Wright 1973:2). Educators must relinquish the aim of banking information into people and substitute it with posing the problems of human beings in relation to their environment. Questions should be raised in order to arrive at the source of the problem and explore ways to change it. The posing of questions enables the person to become critical and therefore authentic. Freire states:

Problem-posing education is prophetic and as such is hopeful, corresponding to the historical nature of human beings. It affirms people as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead . . . for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are, so that they can move wisely to build the future (1985a:57).

In preparation for this model the teacher and student must establish a mutual relationship whereby they teach each other. Instead of the notions "teacher of the students" and "students of the teachers," there is a model of "dialogical relationship between the teacher and student." The teacher emerges as the teacher/student while the students become the students/teachers. This model "... does not dichotomise the activity of the teacher/student: she/he is not 'cognitive' at one point and 'narrative' at another. She/he is always cognitive. . ." (Freire, 1985a:61). And of course the students/teachers are regarded as critical thinkers at every stage themselves.

Problem-posing education as a liberating praxis promotes the idea of people as subjects rather than objects. It enables people to develop their power to perceive things critically and not as passive recipients. More important is the affirmation of their humanity by trusting their



own consciousness. This approach affirms human beings that take the initiative to look ahead and move forward. They only look at history as a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can wisely build the future (Freire 1985a:74).

### *Conscientisation*

Conscientisation lies at the heart of Freire's educational theory. It refers to the awakening of critical awareness. According to Daniel Schipani:

Conscientisation is a process of cultural action in which women and men are awakened to their socio-cultural reality, move beyond the constraints and alienations to which they are subjected, and affirm themselves as conscious subjects and co-creators of their historical future (1988:13).

Conscientisation is not a means to an end or merely consciousness raising, but entails an on-going process of critical action and reflection. In Freire's *Cultural Action for Freedom*, he further defines conscientisation as

... the process in which men [women], not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural that shapes their lives, and for their capacity to transform that reality through action upon it (1972:27).

This process demands a commitment to critically perceive reality and to work toward transforming it. Freire refers to this as "democratic education," for it exists on the belief that people not only can discuss their problems in relation to their environment but also have the power to solve those problems. Conscientisation entails mutual activities such as debates, discussions, dialogue and working with people, rather than imposing knowledge on them.

Freire explains the different stages of consciousness. The first stage is what Freire calls "semi-intransivity"(1973:17). This is the stage where people are depicted as passive and do not see their situation as oppressive. The second stage is the "naïve transivity"(1973:18) stage. Individuals here assume that their problem can be solved without reference to the larger social structure. The important thing to these people is their relationship with God. "Critical transivity"(1973) is the stage in which people analyse their culture and become active participants in changing their status, through social action that aims to change the larger social system.

To progress toward the critical transivity stage, there are three steps involved. The first step is the actual naming of important conflicts in the social situation by using the "generative themes" process. For instance, Freire and his group went and sat with the people in order to discover some of their common concerns. The point here is that people were able to name important conflicts in their social reality. Sitting with the people enabled Freire to generate key words which emerged through his dialogue with them.

The second step is the critical analysis of the systemic causes of the conflicts, including the social, economic, political and religious factors that promote social inequality. The last stage is the collaborative action to resolve conflicts. This involved the "praxis" of reflection and action, which is a never-ending process. It is at this stage that the process of conscientisation occurs as a means of liberating people from their oppressive situations.

Hyung Kyung Chung, in *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*, speaks of consciousness raising in relation to Asian women:



When these women speak the truth of their lives in small group setting, they are empowered by other women's support and move away from self-hate, shame, and guilt. They achieve a clearer understanding of their authentic selves, which have been obscured by patriarchy. These Asian women also form a 'collective,' which leads them to struggle against exploitation and discrimination (1990:96-7).

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza has also claimed that, through the process of conscientisation, women create a new reality of spiritual life, within the deepest meaning of revolutionary praxis (1993:352).

### *Praxis*

The word "praxis" originates from the Greek words, *theoria* and *poiesis*, following Aristotle (1949-1956: 145-7). *Theoria* is knowing by reflection and contemplation. It asks the question: 'What is it?' *Poiesis* is knowing by analysing and focuses on what happens in terms of the actions. This understanding of praxis is an on-going process of action and reflection. Praxis is often mistaken as mere practice, but praxis has to do with the unity or the integration of theory and practice. It involves practice as well as critical reflection. In Freirean terms, praxis is both action and reflection on reality in order to transform it. It is a cyclical process of genuine action and reflection (1985a:41-2).

Freire also borrows from Marxist thought in developing his notion of praxis. He argues that, in order to achieve genuine liberation, human beings must critically reflect and continuously act on their reality. This entails the decoding of reality, "stripping it down so as to get to know the myths that deceive and perpetuate the dominating structure" (Freire, 1972:36). Freire explains this as follows:



Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed . . . the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis (1985a:75).

Praxis is also explained in relation to the different contexts in which it is used. Isasi-Diaz and Yolando Tarago define praxis in the context of the struggles of Hispanic women, whose liberation theology Isasi-Diaz has called *mujerista* theology. In *mujerista* theology, praxis is critical reflective action based on an analysis of historical reality perceived through the lens of an option for and a commitment to the liberation of *Latinas* (1992:1).

Thomas Groome also uses praxis as the core of his religious education methodology, which he termed "shared praxis." He explains this method in terms of five inter-connected movements. Through these five movements, according to Groome, the subject's actions, as well as the actions of past subjects, directly influence our ways of thinking. This process is only made possible when the educator participates with the people in a mutual relationship, to enable them to critically reflect and act on their present dehumanising reality.

### Proposed Bible Study Method as a Springboard for Conscientisation

The example of a liberating Bible study is constructed to serve the following purposes: to develop dialogue, participation, self-identity, empowerment and confidence in women; and to enhance the spirituality of women. The Bible study will also be used to draw out issues within church and community. Many other Bible studies like these can be produced using Paulo Freire's model of conscientisation.



### *Bible Study*

Theme: Education for Empowerment

Text: John4:7-29, Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

#### Activity:

One: Ask the group to move closer to each other in the circle so that their knees are connected. If there are those who are not able to sit down on the floor, the group may use chairs but arrange it in a round shape. Let everyone have a turn in reading a verse from the text. The group may be divided into pairs to read the dialogue between Jesus and the woman of Samaria.

Two: Allow ten minutes for silent meditation on the text. Divide the group into smaller groups of four to five and discuss one question from the list of questions below, with one person acting as the reporter.

#### Three: Questions

These questions are based on Groome's shared praxis model, with the aim of enabling the women to engage in critical action and reflection (praxis). These questions are significant in the sense that they help in the process of raising the women's awareness of the realities of the characters in the story, as well as naming their own realities.

- A) The woman's response to Jesus' request for water gives us a clue about her background. What does her response suggest about this woman?
- B) What was Jesus' response? What does it mean to you?
- C) Can you explain the way Jesus responded to the woman? Could there be another way?
- D) What was Jesus trying to tell the women?
- E) Give a reflection on how your group felt about the dialogue between Jesus and the woman of Samaria. This reflection may be in a form of a song, poem or a short skit.

Four: Ask each group to share their discussions with the whole group. These responses may be recorded on newsprint or on a blackboard if available.

Five: The group has an option of ending with a song everyone knows or a song composed by everyone in the group.

**Insights:** The dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman empowered the woman to name her reality and break through the restrictions of the culture in which she existed. As the group reads the story, they are asked to pay special attention to the words of Jesus and the woman of Samaria.

The women are divided into pairs and asked to dramatise this conversation. This is very creative in the sense that women get to experience what the characters meant as they spoke these words. The women are encouraged to share what they think about the story. The dialogue shows the I-Thou relationship between Jesus and the woman of Samaria.

### *Dialogue*

**Jesus:** Give me a drink.

**Woman:** How is it that you ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?

**Jesus:** If you only knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

**Woman:** Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestors Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks, drank from it?

**Jesus:** Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.



**Woman:** Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirst or have to keep coming here to draw water.

**Jesus:** Go, call your husband, and come back.

**Woman:** I have no husband.

**Jesus:** You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!

**Woman:** Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.

**Jesus:** Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

**Woman:** I know that the Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.

**Jesus:** I am he, the one who is speaking to you.

The climax of this conversation was reached when the woman "left her jar and went back to the city. She said to the people..." (Jn 4:8-9). The woman invited others to experience and witness what she had experienced in her encounter with Jesus.

### *Analysis*

The dialogue between Jesus and the woman of Samaria began with Jesus' request for water: "Give me a drink" (Jn.4:7). This was the common interest between Jesus and the woman. They both longed for "water" from the well. The Samaritan woman refused to give Jesus what he requested because of the social situation of her time: she was a Samaritan, she was a woman, and she was a prostitute (Lydia N. Niguidula 1987: 221). Jews and Samaritans simply did not share their possessions.

Jesus' response to the woman's refusal to give him water created more suspense for the woman: "If you only knew the gift of God, and who it is that is asking you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (Jn.4:10). This response stirred a feeling of curiosity in her, such that she continued to question Jesus about this "living water." At the same time, it also reflected her lack of understanding of the deeper meaning of Jesus' words. However, the dialogue shifted from a level of request for a drink, to the level of a principle (spiritual water) which plays a dominant role in the rest of the story (Hendrikus Boers 1988:4). This dialogue had two main themes: the living water of Jesus, and the true worship in spirit that God seeks.

Jesus chose to approach the woman by focusing on her daily needs and concerns. First, there was her need for water and from there Jesus moved on to her family. In doing so Jesus revealed the present reality of the woman. Significantly, Jesus freed the woman from the bondage of cultural gender norms, which she alluded to in the beginning of the dialogue.

The theme of true worship was also evident in the dialogue: "Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem..." (Jn.4:20-26). By this time the woman had opened herself for the conversation. In the first part of the dialogue she was not able to do this, but rather questioned Jesus identity and ability (Michael Wan Rupulga 76). The woman's words subtly accused not only Jesus but the whole Jewish race, as she used the plural Greek of the pronoun "you". However, Jesus did not leave the woman in darkness, but continued to respond to her question about the right place of worship. Instead He revealed the nature of true worship, which is "in spirit and truth" (Jn.4:23).

The Samaritan woman at the end of the dialogue was elevated to the role of a proclaimer and a teacher (Winsome Munro 1995:722). She



emptied herself to Jesus in an attempt to be filled with the “living water” Jesus promised. Jesus led her on to discover the truth. In the beginning of the dialogue, the woman accepted the present reality that her society had imposed on her. But in the end she was affirmed as a follower of Jesus. She left her jar and hurried with joy and excitement to tell others what she had experienced in her encounter with the man who could be the Messiah (Jn.4:29).

### *Background to the Text*

The conversation between Jesus and the woman of Samaria unveils some of the norms by which the characters live. These norms create barriers between races and sexes. A Jewish man should not talk with a Samaritan woman. Moreover, a Jew would never consider drinking water from a Samaritan vessel (Gail R. O'Day 1992:295).

Jesus' disciples were shocked when they found Him talking to a woman. This story shows Jesus as a liberator who broke through social norms which separated the Jew and the Samaritan. Jesus was obviously very sensitive to the woman's cultural and social background. The Samaritan woman, an outcast whom the Jews did not even treat as a full human being, was given self-confidence as Jesus bowed down and spoke with her, treating her as a person. He also broke the gender barrier when he spoke with a woman. The woman had low self-esteem as a result of the treatment of women in her society, but Jesus enabled her to voice her own opinion and to act on it.

### *Theological Reflection on the Text*

It was through the woman's encounter with Jesus that she was holistically transformed to become the bearer of the Good News about Christ. She completely forgot that she was an outcast and shared with those who despised her what she had learnt from her conversation with the man who claimed to be the Messiah.

The woman's actions can be explained as a process of conscientisation. She was conscientised and was prompted to share her new experience, like the women who witnessed Jesus' resurrection. The woman was not only empowered to reflect on her reality, but she was also stimulated to act out this new experience. She invited others to share in her experience.

This process of conscientisation does not end with one person. It is a continuous process where everyone is invited to participate and experience the message of love, faith and hope that Jesus brings, which liberates people from all oppressive life situations. This was the core of Jesus' mission, the empowering of others so that they could also empower those whom they encountered.

The most important factor to recognise in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman was that Jesus did not condemn her because of her situation. Instead Jesus enabled her to gain self-confidence in her ability as a woman by continuing to dialogue with her, regardless of the gender and cultural barriers surrounding them. Thus, Jesus' mission among the Samaritans began with the holistic empowerment of this woman who became Jesus' disciple. Jesus' attitude toward the Samaritan woman showed his acceptance of women. This aspect of Jesus' ministry drew many social outcasts, especially women, to follow him.

Women in the Bible study group are invited to share what they learn from the story, and particularly how it relates to any oppressive life situations they experience or witness. For instance, women are encouraged to share any relational problems they experience, whether at home, in the church or in the community. One of the common problems Pacific women and women worldwide experience is violence. Violence against women is a matter of great priority in the Pacific because of the major human rights issues affecting women





(UNIFEM, 2003). However, women do not generally feel free to talk about this issue except in the privacy of their homes, where it mostly happens.

## Using the Story to Raise Awareness about Violence

Imagine that the Samaritan woman or any woman in your group is a victim of violence. Jesus enabled the Samaritan woman to come out of her feelings of insecurity and loneliness to become a confident and strong woman. She was no longer silent but wanted to tell everyone about her experience. It is in this telling of stories that a woman who is a victim of violence begins to build up her self-esteem and confidence and to seek help, psychologically and spiritually.

From this awareness a woman can move to the next step, which is concrete action, to address the problem of violence. They may move towards establishing a network of crisis counsellors to assist women who are victims of domestic violence; or consult with their pastor about offering a series of Bible studies for men in their community, which would make them more aware of their own need for transformation on this issue. As these and other actions are analysed and reflected on at every stage, the women move from strength to strength in their own growing empowerment and deepening spirituality.

## Conclusion

As women open themselves to participate and share in this Bible study, they experience a spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ. This is an encounter that brings liberation. The message of Jesus is of a radical and total liberation of the human condition from all its alienating elements (Leonardo Boff 1978:80). Like the woman of Samaria, whom Jesus liberated from the religious and social traditions of her time, Pacific women can also be liberated from whatever life situation they encounter,

in order to be in solidarity with one another and especially with God. Jesus' ideal is a society "neither opulence nor of poverty, but a society of justice and communion among sisters and brothers" (Boff 1989:137). The proposed model provides one possible way of engaging people in dialogue and praxis, which will move individuals and groups towards, not only transformed societies, but transformed lives.



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**PIULA THEOLOGICAL  
COLLEGE**

**THESES AND PROJECTS  
REPORT  
2001-2008**

## Piula Theological College Theses and Projects Report 2001 - 2008

This report presents a brief summary of each of the BD theses and projects written by students at Piula Theological College. These theses provide contextual theological reflections based on the context of Samoan society and the Methodist Church of Samoa. They also demonstrate the quality of theological education offered at Piula Theological College, since the inception of its Bachelor of Divinity Programme in September, 1998.

### **Biblical Studies:**

**AH YEK**, Tualagi. J. P. *An Exegetical Study of Revelation 2:1-7: With reference to the Methodist Church in Samoa.* 2002.

A hermeneutical study that brings on board the historical, biblical, and theological factors which give rise to the problem experienced by the church in Ephesus. A contextual interpretation in the light of the ministry of the Methodist Church of Samoa. It draws parallels between the church in Ephesus and the Methodist Church of Samoa.

**AUVAA**, Laauli Tolo. *God and Humanity in Partnership: A Narrative Criticism of the Calling of Abraham (Genesis 12-22).* 2004.

Looks critically at how the narrator of Genesis perceives Abraham's life journey with God. Aims at reading the story of Abraham from



the eyes of a Samoan pastor. This thesis calls for a re-reading of this episode from a fresh perspective of a contemporary pastor.

**ELIA**, Faapea. *From Dissolution to Restoration: An Exegetical Analysis of Hosea 5:8-6:11a*. 2005.

The study unveils the judgment of God upon Israel. The prophet employs a series of metaphors, similes and figurative language, which affect and shock readers today. This is one of the stylistic ideas of persuasion used by Hosea in conveying his message of judgment: a judgment, which causes dissolution to the whole selected nations. A study that employs the reader oriented criticism, and seeks to relate the text to a suitable situation, which exists in the life of readers today.

**FUAIVAA**, Mosese Mailo. *Jesus' Attitude towards Women in the Gospel according to John (2:1-11; 20:11-18)*. 2001.

Attempts to provide an answer from the New Testament as a response to the issue of women's ordination in the Methodist Church of Samoa. The thesis re-examines Jesus' attitude towards women. Passages from the gospel according to John are selected to unveil Jesus' positive attitude towards women at the same time giving women the opportunity to serve God as faithful believers, but not in terms of their gender.

**LAVATAI**, Sanele. *A Study of the Possible Identities of Enemies in the Psalms and of the Function of the Psalms which refer to Enemies*. 2002.

Focuses on the study of enemies in the Psalms, with particular focus on the prayers in which the Hebrew term 'oyeb'(enemy) is found, with reference to the laments. Attempts to identify some of the possible solutions concerning the identities of enemies in the Psalms from a review of literature and exegesis. Proposes that the images



of enemies present in prayers have a political purpose. No single identification can fully represent the identities of enemies.

**MAUAVA**, Tanifa. *The Contrasting Types of Wisdom represented by Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3:1-10*. 2006.

A social critical study of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus as recorded in John 3:1-10. The thesis reveals the influence of the Samoan concept of *tofa* (wisdom) on the character of Nicodemus in his relationship with Jesus. Recommends that it is this element of Jesus' ministry that should be implemented into the ministry of the Methodist Church of Samoa for the individual and the church to be an agent of liberation and a life giving community.

**TONISE**, Poulea. *A Comparative Study of Isaiah (7:14; 9:1-2; 42:1-4; and 53:4) in Matthew (1:23; 4:14-16; 12:17-21; and 8:17) in relation to the Significance of the Old Testament towards Understanding the Messiah*. 2007.

Argues that Matthew's use of the Old Testament not only applies to the fulfillment of the Old Testament, but was also a disguise for his message to the critical situation of his time. The Old Testament is presented as a reminder of faith, and a call to reconsider and reassess the basics and foundation of the Jewish faith. The study also aims to discuss Matthew's Messiah in relation to his use of the Old Testament, and how its' significance influenced his message.

**TUAIAUFAL**, Koneferenisi. *The Hidden Agenda in Paul's Letter to Philemon: a Socio-Historical Interpretation of verses 8-20*. 2002.

Presents a socio-historical investigation of Philemon verses 8 to 20. The selected approach used in this exegetical study creates a suspicion, that there is a hidden agenda in Paul's letter to Philemon. This thesis is an academic contribution to the field of creative biblical studies,



and its fruits as a timely contribution to the writer's ecclesiastical context, the Methodist Church of Samoa.

## Theology:

**ELU**, Olataga. *A Critical Analysis of the Theology of John and Charles Wesley in the Samoan Methodist Hymn Book*. 2004.

A critical analysis of the hymns of John and Charles Wesley in the Samoan Methodist Hymn Book. Examines the relevance of the Samoan Methodist Hymn Book to Samoa in the present age, and especially within the Methodist Church of Samoa itself.

**FAALAFI**, B. Leuma. *A Theology of the Concept Talia (Acceptance): With Special Reference to the Samoan Methodist Church*. 2006.

Presents a historical overview of *talia* in the Samoan context, focusing also on John Wesley's theology and the constitution of the Methodist Church of Samoa. This thesis also discusses a biblical view of acceptance as used in Jesus' own ministry.

**FUTI**, Faleu. *So'ofa'atasi: A Theology of Ecumenism in the Samoan Context*. 2003.

Acknowledges the social challenges upsetting the Samoan societal structures as depicted in modern Samoa today. Asks the following question: What is the true image of the gospel?; Should the gospel pull all Christians together into a common fellowship or should the gospel segregate the family of God?; Where is ecumenicity heading in contemporary Samoa? This thesis attempts to propose some factual guidelines for Samoans.

**LEFUA**, Aliilelei. *The Concept of Tausi as Expressed in the Selected Biblical Context and in the Mission Approach of the Samoan*. 2007.

Discusses the Samoan concept of *tausí* (shared life) from a religious dimension with reference to biblical images of implementing mission. It explores the correlation of cultural existence and spiritual orientation with specific regard to the Methodist Church of Samoa's approach to mission.

**MAEE**, Falefa. *The Land as Tofi, its Impacts and Challenges on the Methodist Mission of Samoa*. 2008.

An exploration of the significance of land as *tofi* (the chosen body for a purpose in Samoa) and how it has been consistently affected economically, politically, socially and culturally by the global forces. The Methodist Church's focus on saving souls cannot be exempted from global influences. The Methodist church of Samoa is challenged to break the barrier, and voice the prophetic vision if they want to survive in this new millennium.

**MASOE**, Koroseta. *A Theological Reflection on the Samoan Concept Sailimalo (seeking victory): with special reference to the Samoa Methodist Church*. 2007.

An investigation into the significance of *sailimalo* in the Samoan culture with special reference to the Methodist Church of Samoa. In the past, this concept describes the importance of the Samoan identity, as evident in the main reason why they fought wars and declared wars to others. This paper raises new ideas for the mission of the Methodist Church of Samoa today.



**NUUALALO**, Isaako. *Tapena Faafafine Toaga (Prepare as a Diligent Woman): A Contextual Christology of Ministry in the Samoan Context*. 2008.

Focuses on examining Christ's ministry as an example of a service *tapena faa-fafine toaga*. Jesus in his own ministry demonstrated loving and life giving attributes through his encounter with people, especially the poor and marginalized in society. Jesus attended to their spiritual needs as well as recognizing the realities in which people live in terms of their physical needs. *Tapena fa'afafine toaga* presents an ongoing challenge for the ministry of the Methodist Church of Samoa, in terms of recognizing Christ in the gifts and potential of women.

**SAKAI**, Pemerika. *Ia Soo le Fau ma le Fau (Let the arched-purlin be connected with the arched-purlin): a Contextual Theology of Mission from a Samoan Perspective*. 2007.

This thesis offers an original contribution of a contextual theology of mission based on the Samoan *alagaupu* (proverbial saying) "*Ia so'o le fau ma le fau*." It proposes a contextual model that is appropriated to the contexts of the Samoan culture and the Methodist Church of Samoa. A model that provides a challenge to Pacific theologians to construct ways that enhances Christ's mission in their local contexts. This is indeed a Pacific and Samoan way of contextualizing Christ as the first *fau* (arched-purlin) that joins all people to reflect the *missio Dei* (God's mission) in the church.

**SAVAIINAEA**, Filifili. *Towards a Theology of Faafailele (Nurturing): with reference to the Methodist Church of Samoa*. 2008.

Explores the cultural, biblical, and theological elements of *fa'afailele* (nurturing) that are appropriate to the faith nurturing process within the church and Samoan society. The lack of *fa'afailele* within Samoa

society has resulted in the increase in crimes affecting the lives of individuals in families. Re-examines the elements of *fa'afailele* in traditional Samoa and nurturing in Jesus' own ministry to restore love and harmony in Samoan society. Challenges each individual to re-visit the spirituality of nurturing practices within their own relationships.

**SOLAESE**, Faasalafa. *The Theological Significance of the Taupou (Ceremonial Virgin) in the Samoan Context: In Parallel to the Mission of the Methodist Church of Samoa*. 2007.

Offers an original contribution of a contextual model of ministry based on the roles of the *taupou*. This model poses a challenge to Pacific churches as it struggles to make sense of its ministry in the midst of global changes. This study presents the church as the *taupou* of God, saving and nurturing God's people. The model of the *taupou* exists for the purpose of maintaining strength and good relationship among members in traditional Samoan society. Although the significance of the *taupou* is diminishing, this thesis aims to re-examine the lost treasure of Samoan culture.

**TAAVAO**, Iopu. *The Theology of Faaaloalo: A Manifestation of God's Grace*. 2003.

Argues that *faaaloalo* (respect) reveals the true nature of Christianity, and exposes the true image of God implanted in Samoan people. A theological representation that intends to encourage the Christian faith within the Methodist ministry.

**TAUTIAGA**, Iafeta Setefano. *A theological Significance of the Tatau (Tattoo) in the Samoan Context*. 2004.



Attempts to investigate the significance of the *tatau* within the Samoan culture. In ancient times, the *tatau* had been vitally passed from generation to generation with significance, but that is sadly vanishing nowadays. The *tatau* on a young Samoan *taulealea* (man), symbolizes his serving role in his community at large. However, anyone is now eligible even without the slightest cultural association. Many churches deny the *tatau* but having learnt of its importance had made them accept it.

**TUALA**, Falelua. *A Theological Reflection of Tuaoi in Search for Peace and Harmony* in the Samoan Context. 2008.

An attempt to define and assess the concept of *tuaoi* (boundaries), which depicts the importance of land marking (land boundary) as well as personal mutual relationship (human boundary) within the Samoan community. Evaluates the changes within the context of contemporary Samoa and its impact on the significance of *tuaoi*. The thesis searches for a theological aspect of *tuaoi* and its biblical significance that will assist to explain the positive characteristics of *tuaoi* which reflect God's will for His/Her people to live together peacefully.

**TUMAAI**, Samuelu Osoita. *A Theology of the Tulafale in the Samoan Context*. 2003.

An endeavour to rediscover and recapture the reliability of *the tulafale's* (talking chief) service and role in the Samoan context. The thesis attempts to discuss the theology of *tulafale* in the Samoan contextual framework with reference to the challenges posed by the forces of social changes and global technology. Aims to rediscover the status of the *tulafale* in Samoan communal living.

**VAAI**, Upolu Luma. *Towards a Theology of Giving: with reference to the Methodist Church in Samoa*. 2001.

Presents the argument that the theology of giving practiced in the Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS) has been undermined. This thesis proposes a theology of giving that is relevant to the Christian experience today. This proposed theology is a re-adjustment of the understanding of giving with reference to the Bible and with appreciation of the present context of the people. Suggests that it may be time for the MCS to re-examine its theology of giving in order to maintain a life oriented mission.

**VITALE**, Pesì. *Eternal life as the Realized Gift Promise implied through the Sinai Covenant: An Historical Theological Approach*. 2001.

Emphasises that the Sinai Covenant is the historical point of Christian origin in which God's gift of eternal life was realized. Special attention is given to some of the ancient near east tribes' views on the afterlife as well as their beliefs based on their stories about their gods. Reveals that eternal life is a promised gift to be received in this life.

## **Church History:**

**ELI**, Faaufouina. *The Quest for Independence: The Methodist Church in Samoa 1914-1964*. 2004.

Reveals that the years 1914 to 1964 was the period the greatest contentions to be independent of the Australasian Methodist Conference took place. This thesis demonstrates the various stages the Samoan church undertook to secure full autonomous status. Discusses the fact that while the Australasian may have underestimated





the abilities and the intelligence of the local natives, which was a big factor in their reluctance and hesitations to grant full independent status, the Samoans would not be easily fooled.

**ELISAIA**, Elisaia. *The Significance of Wesley's Sermon on the Use of Money in relation to the Samoan Concept of Faasoa and its Existence in the Samoan Methodist Church*. 2008.

An attempt to evaluate the founder of the Methodist Church in the world (John Wesley) with his popular sermon "The Use of Money" and its application in the life and ministry of the Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS). A theological reflection that suggests, it may be time for the MCS to re-examine its values and its interpretation of earning, saving and giving in relation to the current context and needs Samoan people.

**FALETAGALOA**, Fogaena Mapesona. *Sa ma Faiga o Manono*. 2004.

Explores and traces the roots and identity of Manono, in the Samoan traditional setting in history. It is a history of Manono as "a people" and as an "island." Writing, analyzing and interpreting the oral history of Samoa is indeed, a precious and essential task for a modern Samoan historian. It definitely determines the who, when, why and what of our beings.

**TAULELEI**, Faleupolu Lester. *The History of the Methodist Church in Fagatogo*. 2007.

Describing the history and emergence of the Samoan Methodist Church in Fagatogo, American Samoa. It argues that the spread of the Gospel by way of establishing new churches in Samoa was not a

domain to the white missionaries but also with the support and leading by Samoan cultural influences. The history and emergence of the Samoa Methodist Church in Fagatogo in which the clash of the highest family in the village gave birth to a new beginning in the history

## Church and Society:

**AMIAITUTOLU**, Pelupelu. *Village Politics and the Methodist Parish Minister in Samoa with reference to the Biblical Evidence: the Quest for the Provision of Guiding Principles*. 2005.

A survey of the historical and theological understanding of the relationship between a Samoan Methodist parish minister and Samoan village authorities. This study discovers that most of the problems encountered by ministers in the villages today is a clear reflection of the clash between gospel and culture, although for a long time gospel and culture have worked alongside each other in maintaining stability and unity in Samoan society.

**IOAPO**, Karama Ofisa. *The Child's Right to Freedom in the Samoan Context in Contrast to the Concept of Freedom in the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. 2006.

A contextual reflection on the right of the child to freedom, as based on the child rights convention (CRC), the Bible and the Samoan culture. The thesis explains how and when the CRC was introduced into Samoa. It asserts that regardless of race or religion, all children have the right to shelter, the right to be nurtured, and the right to be educated and cared for, thereby assured of full and rewarding life in society. A conversation between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Samoan culture.



**LAUTASI, Osana.** *The Developing of Theological Institution Academically.* 2001.

Examines the establishment of theological institutions such as Piula Theological College of the Methodist Church of Samoa, and Malua Theological College of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. Focuses on the period of 1950s to 1960s. Also makes contrast between secular education and theological education.

**LEFAOSEU, Iosefa Niko.** *God Created an Ecological Family: God Called the Church to be Stewards of that Family.* 2002.

Discusses the significance of the ecological partnership of humankind and nature and the importance of sustaining this relationship. In ancient times, Samoan people considered living creatures in the environment as neighbours and members of their ecological family. In this era, Samoans are tending to move away from this partnership and family heritage, and shift towards exploiting the ecology for personal gains and individual desires.

**SAVAIINAEA, Liua.** *The Issue of Child Development: with reference to Children of the Methodist Church in Samoa.* 2002.

Explores the issue of child development in the appropriate areas of Samoan culture and values, Christian education and the Methodist Church of Samoa. This study adds a contextual interpretation of children's experiences in the light of the existing literature, with the intention that this data will inform the educational ministry of the Methodist Church of Samoa.

**SILA**, Saunoa. *An Image of a Samoan Youth in a Changing Society*. 2001.

The thesis argues that the lost reality of a Samoan youth is due to the impact of social changes of the modern era. Raises the awareness of society on the image of youth as gradually changing, therefore strategies must be formulated to determine the youth image during the challenges of incoming social changes.

**TAOTUA**, Wesley Tulimanu. *Intimacy of John Wesley as a Paradigm for the Samoa Methodist Church*. 2005.

The intimacy of John Wesley was expressed by methods employed in which an individual was given the opportunity to experience in a community the immense pleasure of holy living. This methodical quest for intimacy has been the foundation by which all Methodist societies are formed. This study investigates both John Wesley and the Samoa Methodist Church in their search for this intimacy. An examination of pluralism within the Samoa Methodist Church will demonstrate that cultural and unconstitutional practices play a major role in the implementation of intimacy. Aims to discover if the conservatism of the Samoa Methodist Church hinders the intimacy in its ministry and leadership.

**TOLAI**, Samuelu. *Youth in the Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand: A Quest for a Contemporary Ministry*. 2005.

Describes the concept of youth in its various contexts, focusing on a psychological understanding, religious understanding, traditional Samoan, Samoan Methodist Church, and Samoan youth in New Zealand. The increasing demands of New Zealand youth for a contemporary ministry reflects the irrelevancy of the traditional ministry in catering the spiritual and socio-cultural needs of Samoan



youth in New Zealand. The ongoing exodus of Samoan youth from the *lotu* (church) and *aiga* (family) in New Zealand, shows the intense impact of conflicts established between the European and the Samoan cultural values. This thesis recommends the Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS) to recall John Wesley's notion of evangelization, to be able to reach out to Samoan youth. It calls for the MCS to adopt new strategies, new alternatives and a new vision to cater for the social, cultural, and spiritual needs of Samoan youth living in New Zealand.

**TUIVANU**, Tamatasi. *The Atofevailiai and the Problem of Youth Suicide: with reference to the Youth of the Methodist Church in Samoa*. 2002.

Argues that the lack of understanding and sharing between parents and youths, contributes to the problem of youth suicide. Particular focus is on the place of youth in traditional and contemporary Samoan society, with special reference to the Methodist Church of Samoa. This thesis proposes a contextual model of dialogue that facilitates the youth to engage in open sharing with their parents.

**URIMA**, Lone. *The Deception of Homosexuality in Samoa*. 2004.

Presents an initial attempt from a member of the Methodist Church of Samoa to openly discuss the issue of homosexuality. It argues that homosexuality does exist in Samoa, and draws the attention of the readers to the present situation of homosexuality worldwide, in order for the Church to take preparatory action. Reflects the ongoing struggle with the issue of homosexuality in church and society.

*(Prepared by Mercy Maliko)*

## Book Review

*Waves of God's Embrace : Sacred Perspectives from the Ocean*  
by Winston Halapua

Published by : Canterbury Press Norwich, 13-17 Long Lane,  
London EC1A 9PN. [www.scm-canterburypress.co.uk](http://www.scm-canterburypress.co.uk)  
July, 2008. ISBN 978-1-85311-922-4

*Reviewed by Jane Ricketts*

The cover of Winston Halapua's book, *Waves of God's Embrace : Sacred Perspectives from the Ocean*, is blue, ultramarine, the colour of a calm tropical sea fading to turquoise where sunlight shines on shallow water over coral reefs. It expresses visually the metaphor that lies at the heart of this little gem of a book in which the ocean represents God, Our Creator, empowering, enriching, connecting both the physical world and its inhabitants, ourselves and all of humanity.

This unusual symbol comes naturally to the author who is himself a child of the ocean. As a young boy growing up in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, Winston loved to accompany his father, Fine, on nightly fishing trips to the Lagoon. The fish caught were needed to feed the family and Winston learnt at this early age to appreciate these gifts from the ocean.

Many years later in this small book he recalls this experience and shares with his readers his deepening awareness of the mystery and power of the sea. Drawing on facts and illustrations from diverse genres and fields of study: theology, prayer, poetry, oceanography, geography, history, sociology, memoir, he presents a message that is simple but profound. To convey his meaning he has created a new



word, *theomoana* combining *theo* from theology, the study of God, with *moana*, the ancient Polynesian word for the sea.

While *Waves of God's Embrace* is about the ocean the author is down to earth in his approach. He reminds us of the many difficult issues we currently face both in Oceania and more generally throughout the world, problems such as climate change, conflict over land, struggles for political power, cultural misunderstanding and the search for identity. This book offers hope as we confront these challenges. In the introductory words of Allan K Davidson , "*theomoana* - God the Ocean- is a metaphor to open up new ways of seeing and understanding".

It is also a user friendly and attractive book. Below each chapter title small black and white motifs- a frigate bird, a fish, a tapa design – add a Pacific flavour and the headings and sub headings make it easy for readers to locate specific topics which cover interesting factual information about the region.

*Waves of God's Embrace* should be required reading for all students of theology in and around the Pacific. Hopefully it will also find a much wider readership. Students from Form 6 and above could find in it relevant information for project topics in a number of subjects including English and, quite apart from formal study, it would make a welcome gift bringing pleasure and comfort to many. The author writes :

As the waves of the world break over reefs and embrace the coastlines, so the waves of the God whom we may describe and celebrate as the great *moana* embrace us without ceasing . . . . .

The waves of the oceans dance. *Theomoana* celebrates that there can be joyous dancing together even in our diversity.  
( p93 )



Separated from each other as we are often are and beset by frightening images of global financial meltdown, terrorism and rising sea levels we need to hear these positive, poetic words. The God presented in this book is both infinitely powerful and compassionate.

## Book Review

*The God Book. Talking about God Today*

Edited by Neil Darragh, Accent Publications, 2008

ISBN 0-9583454-8-1

*Reviewed by Tessa Mackenzie*

Are we embarrassed or too shy to talk about God in public? For most of us Pacific Islanders we would deny this is a problem. Religion is very much in the public domain and we talk about God without embarrassment. So we may turn away from this book, which would be shortsighted. This book has a rich collection of articles on the topic of talking about God and a wide range of approaches to the subject, and deals with some interesting issues that are relevant for our island churches and our peoples.

The book is the initiative of Neil Darragh who sees the need to be able to talk about God and religion publicly in the face of the militant religious fundamentalism that has invaded New Zealand, and that is also present in the islands. Darragh sees that because public discourse on religion and God has been suppressed in recent years in New Zealand there is a lack of adequate vocabulary to respond to the issues facing people.



Darragh has gathered articles from nineteen writers most of whom are Catholic, and, interestingly, thirteen of whom are women. There is a rich variety of views as the writers each address the issue from their particular standpoint. Originally stimulated by a symposium on the topic "Talking about God today" held in 2007, the articles have been arranged in four sections that set the scene, research sources of 'God language', tap into the mystical tradition, and also into the contemporary scene. Two articles from non-Christians add another dimension to the topic.

The boundaries between religion and secularism, between what is acceptable for religion to address publicly and what religion should not interfere with, are being challenged in many places and over many issues. For example, there is a confusion over how far religion should influence party politics or be used as a tool to promote particular political agenda.

Another problem arises when religious language, with particular meaning clear to adherents of that particular religion is used in public without clear definition, giving rise to mis-interpretation and confusion. Examples of this can be gleaned sometimes from letters in the daily press in Fiji. For those of us living in multi-faith situations, confidence in speaking about one's beliefs in public discussion and clarity of expression is essential to promote understanding and mutual respect.

The rise in fundamentalism especially in Christianity is another reason why Christians from the so-called mainline churches need to equip themselves with adequate vocabulary in order to articulate alternative views to those expressed by people with a literal interpretation of the Bible.

This book will help Christians to reflect on their faith and clarify their understandings and avoid naivety when entering into public discussion.

# Information for Contributors

## Policy Statement

The *Pacific Journal of Theology* is published twice yearly by the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS). It seeks to stimulate theological thinking and writing by Christians living in or familiar with the South Pacific, and to share these reflections with church and theological education communities, and with all who want to be challenged to reflect critically on their faith in changing times. Opinions and claims made by contributors to the journal are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board or SPATS and its constituent bodies, nor of associations with which the authors are affiliated.

The Editorial Board welcomes various kinds of writing that express an emerging Pacific theology. These may include:

- ◆ original articles in the theological disciplines
- ◆ articles relating theological thinking to Pacific cultures, contemporary issues and other academic disciplines
- ◆ helpful material for pastors and church workers (liturgical, pastoral, educational)
- ◆ artistic expressions of the Christian faith (poetry, visual art, music)
- ◆ notes and reviews of books that are relevant for Pacific Christians
- ◆ information about ongoing research in the theological disciplines in the Pacific.



*Guidelines for Authors* : The Editorial Board will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard and in keeping with the overall policy of the journal. Articles in English, French or Pacific languages will be considered. Poetry, photographs and black and white drawings are also welcome. Manuscripts must be previously unpublished and not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

*Review policy: Criteria for Acceptance* : Following initial screening, papers are reviewed by two or more board members, using these criteria:

- Relevance and/or currency of interest to the Pacific Islands.
- Contribution to current debates.
- Originality, balance, scholarship.
- Argument, organisation and presentation. The final decision to publish is retained by the Editor and the Editorial Board, who may also suggest editorial changes for all articles submitted for publication.

*Submissions*, addressed to the Editor, *PJT*, (see SPATS contact address, inside front cover), **must** comply with the following requirements:

*Maximum length*: 6000 words  
(book reviews 1000 words)  
including notes.

*Style*: Australian Government Publishing Service, *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 5th edn; or the 6th edn revised by Snooks & Co. and published by Wiley in 2002.

*Spelling*: British (not American) spelling is preferred. Follows the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

*Notes*: In the manuscript, all notes, commencing on a new page, must be double-spaced end- (and not foot-) notes. Notes should be substantive only, not documentation. In the text, the identifier, if in superscript, should be outside the punctuation, like this: <sup>1</sup> If you use the Insert, Notes facility, the program will superscript for you. If you prefer to construct your list of notes manually, you will have to set the identifiers manually too.

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*Author and date referencing in text.* (surname date:page) e.g. at the end of a clause or sentence, (Ernst 1994:8); or, within a sentence, 'Little (1996:212) notes that . . . '.

*Reference list*, commencing on a new page, of all (and only) cited references listed alphabetically by author and, within author, by date, title and publisher. Use italics for book and journal titles, single inverted commas and minimal capitalisation for article titles, and no markings for presented papers or unpublished texts. Chapters and articles should show page numbers. See *Style*. e.g.:

Ernst, Manfred, 1994, *Winds of Change: rapidly growing religious groups in the Pacific Islands*, Pacific Conference of Churches, Suva.

Little, Jeanette, 1996, "..... and wife": Mary Kaaialii Kahelemauna Nawaa missionary wife and missionary', in *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific*, eds. Doug Munro & Andrew Thornley, Pacific Theological College & Institute of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji, pp.210-34

*Cover page:* A separate cover page must include: title, author's name, affiliation, postal, fax and e-mail addresses, and a list of any maps, figures etc. accompanying the text. Please include brief biographical data and a head-and-shoulders photo of the author, with any necessary information about the paper, e.g. details of where it was presented, in the case of a conference paper.

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of the file, each on a separate page; or in separate files; or submit camera-ready copies on separate pages. Publication will be b & w. Any necessary attribution notes and copyright clearances are author's responsibility.

*Computer processing:* MS Word preferred.

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*Electronic submission:* E-mail attachments addressed to the editor at the SPATS e-address are the fastest. A 3.5" diskette or CD-ROM is also acceptable. The electronic file must contain *all* files relevant to the manuscript. If hard copy is submitted, it is helpful to provide an electronic file as well.





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